

Chronicles

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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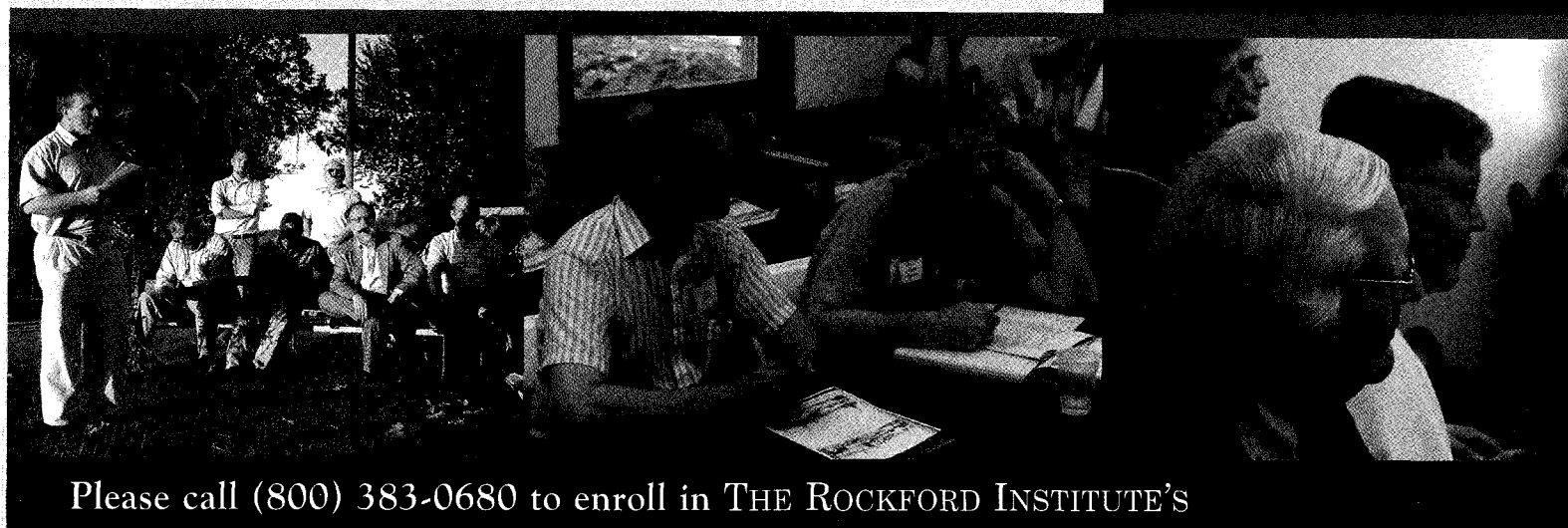
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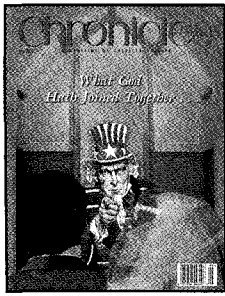
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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Home Schools

It was a great surprise to me to find something in the February issue of *Chronicles* with which I disagree. (Normally, I find myself nodding vigorously in assent while reading each new issue.) In his piece in *Cultural Revolutions*, R. Cort Kirkwood argued that the recent defeat of the intelligent-design crowd in Dover, Pennsylvania, should not surprise us. He hits the nail on the head perfectly when he writes, "Public schools are uniformly atrocious. They are blighted educationally and noxious morally." His later comments, however, raise some questions. Mr. Kirkwood claims that private Christian parochial schools are numerous and that an even better choice is homeschooling. "Indeed," he says, "any serious Christian knows that putting a child in public school is a grave sin, given the crippling, lowbrow academics and anti-Christian cultural toxins to which such children are exposed."

Perhaps the case is different in Mr. Kirkwood's hometown, but the options are not that varied everywhere. Private Christian academies are abundant, but they also cost thousands of dollars per year and are often not much better than public schools. Christians have a tendency to take whatever courses the public schools offer and merely "Christianize" them, without any serious consideration of whether there is a better academic option. In addition, parochial schools seem to be on the decline in the United States. There are often more empty, deteriorating Catholic-school buildings in a town than active ones.

I agree that homeschooling is an excellent choice, but is it not one to which every parent is well suited. There are many "serious Christian" parents who did not do well in school (and perhaps did not even finish it) and who, quite frankly, do not have the knowledge necessary to teach their own children. Yes, they could go back to school or even educate themselves, but this, in addition to the everyday task of parenting, is a heavy requirement. There are also families in which both parents have to work outside the home. I realize that, more often than not, this is done because the individuals involved wish to and not because they must, but

the latter situation does exist.

Finally, I wish to question Mr. Kirkwood's authority to declare anything a sin that is so personal in nature and dependent on financial and intellectual ability as the education of one's children. If, by this, he means a "sin" against the children, he may be correct, but it is one that is sadly unavoidable for many. If, however, he is referring to a sin against God, although his sentiment is admirable, I believe he took his point too far.

—Marie Strang
Milwaukee, WI

Mr. Kirkwood Replies:

I appreciate Miss Strang's thoughtful answer to my article.

She is correct about the deteriorating Catholic schools, as well as in her assertion that some private Christian academies provide warmed-over nonsectarian curricula. A thin veneer of Christian theology will not overcome the shortcomings of a poor, immoral curriculum. And, indeed, some parents might not be suited to homeschool their children. I have no solution to the problem of cretins. Like the poor, I suppose, they will always be with us. Then again, maybe they wouldn't be too stupid to educate their own children were it not for their own public-school training.

I used to believe that, in some families, both parents "have to work." I am unconvinced about that now. In many cases, the reason both parents "have to work" is that they live beyond their means, incurring huge, unnecessary debts by purchasing cars and homes they cannot afford, and running up credit cards to the limit. Families in which both parents "have to work" are often, if not mostly, families whose lives are ruled by making payments on consumer items they should not have purchased. They refuse to distinguish between needs and wants.

But let us suppose that both parents "have to work." If they really want to homeschool, they might have to sacrifice. It might require one parent to work a night shift. It might require one parent to work weekends. If the parents decide that one should stay home, then they might have to sell a car that costs

\$300 per month and buy an old beater. They might have to move to a smaller home. Dad might have to take a second job. These are not preferable options, but parents must do what they must to protect and educate their children.

As for Miss Strang's most important point, that I wrongly said that putting a child in public school is a sin, I stand my ground. This isn't 1950, 1960, or even 1970. The public schools are unacceptable for a truly Christian parent. Scandalizing children is a grave sin. Any parent who knowingly exposes a child to scandal commits that grave sin, and ignorance of what the public schools do is no excuse. Parents are obliged to care for their children, which means examining the schools in which they would enroll them. However, most of them do not give the decision a moment's thought. They simply bundle up their kids at age five, shove them on the government bus, and send them off—eight hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year, for twelve years. And then they wonder why they don't know their children and why their children are morally addled. Then they gasp, "But we didn't raise him that way!" No, they didn't "raise" him at all: The public schools did.

Parents' most important job is educating a child for eternity, which means doing everything they can to get a child to Heaven. This is what God intended and expects. Putting a child in public school frustrates that mission by immersing him in a morally noxious environment that might undermine his faith. That some children emerge intact is miraculous.

On Education Reform

I agree with much of the premise of Clay Reynolds' piece "The Real Crisis of Higher Education" in the February issue (*Vital Signs*): Certainly, as he indicates, education at all levels in the United States is failing. High schools no longer prepare students for life and work but "to take standardized tests" for advanced learning.

However, his solution to improve the quality of our colleges seems to be to throw more money at public institutions of "higher" learning. This approach has not had any success at the primary or secondary level, and I have no confidence that it would fare any better at the college level. The fact that, "Even today, a B.A. is not necessary for someone to be

a contributing, well-informed, responsible member of society," means that we should be concentrating on better secondary education and increasing the quality, rather than the quantity, of college opportunities.

Those opportunities should be available to those who can afford them, and to those whose abilities and efforts qualify them for genuine scholarships. As in the efforts to make private- and parochial-school education available to children (in other words, to put competition into the system), provisions for higher learning should largely be a matter of private funding. Students who successfully complete a serious college course will benefit more than those who do not, and, therefore, they should bear the cost of their education themselves.

—Mary Kohler
Sheboygan, WI

Professor Reynolds Replies:

What I said was, "Whereas, it is true that 'throwing more money' into higher education won't solve the problems, it is also true that the problems cannot be solved without more money; it's a lead-pipe cinch that they won't be solved by taking money away from it. Education ... requires constantly increasing contributions of large sums merely to sustain itself." Public education represents an intelligent social and political investment that cannot be held to the same standards of return that apply to a corporate model. The problem with "throwing money" at education has been that it has not always been overseen and controlled by the people who were involved in the actual educational process (e.g., faculty), and it is not always applied where it is needed: more and better-qualified and better-paid faculty, better facilities, smaller class sizes, and increased resources. Instead, "fiscal accountability" and glitzy image is the norm. It is logical that a college diploma will benefit people; but if the

accomplished learning that the diploma represents continues to be devalued by declining standards, eroding quality, and an incessant demand for measurable, quantified accountability (most of which is made up, anyway), then whatever benefits it might offer will soon go the way of those previously associated with a high-school degree. A college diploma should not be a requirement for a successful, fulfilling life or for many professions that now routinely demand it, but that is the situation we have created, although we have not prepared ourselves to deal with the consequences. In spite of constantly increasing enrollments and more and more outdated facilities, most state universities are teaching more students with the same (or fewer) resources and faculty that they had 20 years ago. The painful fact is that many of the students simply shouldn't be there; many just don't want to be. But they are told that they have to be. Pressure to move students directly out of high school and through college, regardless of quality of learning, has resulted in generally poor preparation for professional or any other kind of life. It is also responsible, I think, for the appalling high-school drop-out rate, particularly among minorities. College is out of the financial reach of many middle-class families unless they borrow heavily. Rising tuition costs create enormous personal debt, much of which will never be repaid simply because potential incomes won't support it.

My argument is that more money is needed for schools to do their jobs and to avoid a diploma-mill mentality, in which demand for fiscal accountability has resulted in mass education through megaclassrooms, overtaxed facilities, overburdened and grossly underpaid faculty, and outmoded resources. The only solution that I can see is to recognize the need for intelligently applied and vastly increased funding to ensure that higher education has the capability of fulfilling its mission of providing our nation with graduates well prepared and well educated to face an increasingly uncertain future.

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“Roe vs. Wade for Men™”?

The *schadenfreude* in watching society collapse comes from knowing that leftist ideology, by way of the law of unintended consequences, ushered in the fall. Fifty years ago, no one would have thought that real men who instinctively protected women and children would transmogrify into eunuchs who send women into combat and murder the unborn.

Yet, just when you think you've heard it all, you haven't. In America, keeping pace with the latest moral outrage is akin to Zeno's hare catching his tortoise.

Bid welcome to Matthew Dubay, of Saginaw, Michigan, a computer technician who has become the latest warrior to sally forth for “equal rights.” His reasoning is simple: He doesn't want to pay child support. His depravity seems bottomless, but, given what the left has done to American culture and law, you almost have to agree with him.

Dubay and his attorney, Jeffrey A. Cojocar, are being joined by the Long Island-based National Center for Men in filing a federal lawsuit that they are calling “Roe vs. Wade for Men™.” (The trademark symbol is part of the official name.) The 25-year-old boy claims that the state's mandate of \$500 per month to support his unwanted bastard child Elisabeth, now 8 months old, is unjust. But his case offers a twist. Dubay was blindsided, he insists, because he did not have an “equal” voice in the decision to bring the child into the world. The mother, Lauren Wells, a college student, could have put the child up for adoption or aborted her, but she did not.

Among the facts arrayed in Dubay's ten-page lawsuit against Wells and the state of Michigan is the claim that he told Wells he did not want to be a parent. Wells then “explicitly informed” Dubay that she was infertile and was using birth control as “an extra layer of assurance and protection.” Thus did the procreation proceed.

Dubay's lawsuit seeks to stop the enforcement of Michigan's Paternity Act and features the boilerplate egalitarianism ever emanating from the miasma of the 14th Amendment. Among other things, it claims that “the right to privacy . . . has never been confined solely to fe-

males,” for it “includes the right to procreate as well as the right to avoid procreation by men and women alike.”

Dubay says the paternity act is an “unequivocal violation of equal protection” under the 14th Amendment because it “imposes special broad and dissimilar responsibilities and obligations upon men such as Dubay, while affording certain privileges, rights and choices to be unilaterally made [sic] and exercised by females such as Wells.” Not surprisingly, Dubay complains that the defendants damaged his reputation and self-esteem and caused financial harm.

The bottom line comes from Mel Feit, director of the National Center for Men: “Roe says a woman can choose to have intimacy and still have control over subsequent consequences,” he told the Associated Press. “No one has ever asked a federal court if that means men should have some similar say.”

That's why they call it “Roe vs. Wade for Men™.” The men “want some say.”

Given what feminism tells us about men and women, Dubay's argument has an odious logic. An ideology rooted in the leftist, anti-Christian falsehood that men and women are identical, feminism says that women do not need a man's protection or help, that they are not the “weaker sex,” and that all laws predicated on such “patriarchal” poppycock must be expunged. Feminism claims that women can do anything men can do. Amusingly, this lawsuit may prove men can do anything women can do; at any rate, feminism is self-evidently false, which hasn't stopped women or men from chugging the feminist bilge. Feminist mothers and gelded fathers importune boys to compete against girls in football and wrestling, and women even join combat units in the Armed Forces. Our bemedaled admirals and generals in the Pentagon, sacrificing to Goddess Xena, send women to get killed and maimed in Iraq.

Before this step forward, however, the sisterhood sang songs of free sex. Feminism says, and men and women now believe, that a woman can and should sleep around. Simultaneously, a slattern has not only “the right to choose” abortion but the right to bear the child and de-

mand payment from a man who was perhaps unaware that the child was born. Feminism says nothing is wrong with abortion, turkey-baster bastards, or anything else. And most men agree.

Dubay and his generational cohort believe that women who decide to bear children can rear them alone. They learn it in school. They see it on television. They read it in newspapers. Dubay merely regurgitates what the schools and mass media poured into his empty noggin.

So Dubay comes to the bar armed with settled constitutional law and cultural norms that approve rampant promiscuity and abortion on demand. They say women will decide the question; the husband, even the parents of a minor, can just shut up. Yet they say something else, the nail on which Dubay hangs his legal hat: Discrimination on the basis of sex is a sin under the law.

In the suicidal culture in which we live, Dubay's loathsome logic is irrefutable. If women can earn as much or more income as men, and if the decision to bear children is theirs, they have no legal claim on men. Then again, goes the official lie, the courts award support for the child, not the mother. And that is why Dubay will lose.

Dubay's action is despicable and wrong. A real man supports his children, and, in a society that reared real men, Dubay's refusal to pay up in marriage, money, or both would invite the girl's father or brothers to settle up outside the courtroom. That said, Dubay can only operate in the culture that whelped him. He invites that culture's courts to explain to him why he is wrong. 

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INDIA, during the Cold War, was officially nonaligned. She was closer to the Soviet Union, which saw her as a natural "anti-colonialist" ally and also wanted a regional counterbalance for China—and accordingly assisted India militarily and politically, especially during U.N. debates over the Kashmir conflict. Later, in 1998, India's continued refusal to sign the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and her nuclear tests led to the Clinton administration imposing partial sanctions against India.

Since Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984, relations have gradually warmed, nuclear disagreements notwithstanding. Successive Indian governments have sought better relations with the United States, most recently the reforming and business-friendly United Progressive Alliance government of Manmohan Singh (a Congress Party-led coalition that took over from the Hindu nationalist-led government in 2004).

As long ago as 1999, George W. Bush was advocating a closer relationship with a country that, in common with Soviet-era policymakers, he saw as a potential bulwark against Chinese ambitions. (India fought a losing war against China along the two countries' 1,000-mile border in 1962.) One of the earliest foreign-policy actions of Bush's administration was to lift some of the 1998 sanctions. President Bush met with the prime minister of India in 2001. In 2004, the two countries launched a "Strategic Partnership," and, in 2005, Messrs. Bush and Singh announced a range of other initiatives, from nuclear technology (apparently much to Singh's surprise) to disaster relief.

After September 11, India has also been seen as a potential ally against global Islam, and she has shared terrorism intelligence with the United States. There are also increasing economic links between the two countries; India is now the United States' largest trading and investment partner. (U.S. exports to India, and *vice versa*, have more than doubled since 2001.) Large American businesses clearly hope to be able to buy into a dynamic economy (there has been six-percent average annual growth since 1980) that is gradually removing barriers to foreign investment, and in which they can employ workers at a fraction of their costs in the United States. It was hardly surpris-

ing that America should eventually have taken a pragmatic approach to India's nuclear capability.

Arguably, although America might have negotiated a little harder, what else could she have done? Indian nuclear capability is a *fait accompli*. She is trying to become less reliant on imported fuels, so her nuclear industry is destined to expand (it now accounts for just three percent of energy needs), and Washington would rather have India reliant on U.S. or other Western nuclear expertise than on, say, Chinese nuclear expertise or Iranian natural gas.

But this new alliance raises awkward questions. The most obvious is, How will America's valuable Muslim allies—especially India's old enemy, Pakistan—react? And isn't there a danger that America might get drawn into India's combustible internal politics? On March 2, Mr. Bush praised India's "free, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society." (There are 22 official languages in India and an estimated 250 separate ethnic groups, many speaking unofficial languages and dialects.) A corollary of this is often violent Hindu-Muslim strife all across the country. In the recent past, there has also been bloody Hindu-Sikh strife in the Punjab. (I was once witness to the aftermath of some of this, when the ship I was on was responsible for salvaging the dead bodies of 300-plus Indians blown up in a plane in 1985.) In the northeastern province of Tripura, Christian fundamentalists have been assassinating prominent Hindus since the 1970's. The southeastern province of Tamil Nadu is plagued by violent separatists allied to those on Sri Lanka. There are also Maoist terrorists; just two days before Mr. Bush's visit, they murdered 25 people in central India. Quite apart from these ideological irritations, there has been a major problem with armed bandits—most famously Veerappan, a handlebar-mustachioed sandalwood smuggler and mass murderer, who virtually ruled parts of south-central India until he was killed in a 2004 shootout.

And finally, there is the caste-ridden and shambolic nature of Indian society, with its glaring disparities and resentments, which surely must make all objective observers call into question the long-term viability of "the world's biggest democracy." It makes sense to be

on good terms with India, but Americans should not expect too much from the relationship.

—Derek Turner

ROBERT A. TAFT, in a speech delivered at Kenyon College in October 1946, expressed strong opposition to the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials that were just ending. Taft argued that the defendants, the architects of the Nazi regime who had been found guilty of waging a war of aggression and had been sentenced to death, were clearly being tried under *ex post facto* laws, which are expressly forbidden in the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, Taft stressed that the trial of the "vanquished by the victors cannot be impartial no matter how it is hedged about with forms of justice," and that it was based on the "Russian idea of the purpose of trials, government policy and not justice, having little relation to our Anglo-Saxon heritage." He also warned that the trial and its sentences would not "discourage the making of aggressive war, for no one makes aggressive war unless he expects to win."

Taft's criticism of the Nuremberg Trials, later echoed by U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and John F. Kennedy (who devoted a chapter to Taft in his book, *Profiles in Courage*), sound somewhat mild today against the backdrop of the "farce"—the term former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein used to describe his trial before an Iraqi High Tribunal. According to press reports, in five months of proceedings, the court has managed only 17 actual court days amid tight security and accompanied by hunger strikes; boycotts by lawyers; and the assassinations of a judge, two defense lawyers, and a court employee.

Indeed, some of the scenes from the trial would make the producers of *Saturday Night Live* green with envy. Saddam's codefendant, Barzan al-Tikriti, the former Mukhabarat (domestic intelligence service) head, showed up in court in his underwear, while Saddam complained that guards were watching him use the toilet. The prosecutor and the defense attorneys kept screaming at one another, and the chief judge repeatedly hit a red button to cut off the microphone while Saddam, who has been held in solitary

confinement since his capture in December 2003, declared again and again that he was the only legitimate president and called on the Iraqis to launch a holy war against the American occupiers. "Let the people unite and resist the invaders of their backers," Saddam said at one point. "Don't fight among yourselves." And he continued to address the court even after the chief judge had hit the red button.

U.S. officials have argued that, by supposedly giving ultimate control over the trial to Iraqis (as opposed to international judges or Americans), they have ensured that the former dictator would be tried by his own countrymen. The decision to do that reflected frustrations among the Americans and Europeans over the disastrous trial at The Hague of the former president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic. That media spectacle was dismissed in Serbia as "foreigners' justice" and seemed to have helped to rehabilitate Milosevic. But the suggestion that the trial is under the total control of the Iraqis is as preposterous as the notion propagated by the Bushies that the Iraqi security forces were ready to take over from the Americans.

The U.S. Justice Department has sent at least 50 legal experts to Baghdad to advise the Iraqis, and Greg Kehoe, the head of something called the U.S. Regime Crimes Liaison Office, controls—together with a large group of U.S. intelligence officials—most of the Ba'athist archives, which are now stored in Qatar. That means that the Americans are the ones who decide on the evidence to be presented before the court to convict Saddam. One doesn't have to be a conspiracy theorist to imagine that documents that point to links between former U.S. administrations and Hussein's regime or other evidence that implicates current Iraqi officials in mass murder will be excluded. At the same time, the forensic examination of the hundreds of people buried in mass graves is an enormous task in itself and well beyond the capacity of the few Iraqis and foreigners in the country who are trained for such work.

As Taft and other critics of the Nuremberg Trials suspected, trials of ex-dictators and "war criminals," including the International Criminal Tribunal now hearing testimony about events in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, are, by definition, political events that provide a pseudo-legal forum in which the victorious side in an international or civil war can punish the losers based on very specific political considerations. That explains why Japan's Emperor Hirohito was not put on

trial by the Americans after the defeat of his nation in World War II; in fact, the U.S. government paid for the trip he and his family made to Disneyland. The decision made in the case of Saddam was that the Americans would produce and write the script for the legal drama while assigning Iraqis as the actors in the show. Like much of what the Americans have done in Iraq, this trial demonstrated unbelievable incompetence and proved to be a public-relations disaster.

Saddam and his seven codefendants are on trial for the execution of 140 Shiites in the village of Dujail in a reprisal for a failed assassination attempt on the Iraqi dictator in 1982. Saddam and his attorney contend that the trying of a suspect who was attempting to assassinate a head of state isn't a crime and wasn't one in this case. But the prosecution argues that the trial before the Revolutionary Court in 1984 was a sham, pointing out that 46 of the defendants were executed before the start of the trial and that some of them were minors. That is probably true and reflects the kind of "legal" system that exists in the Arab world today. With the exception of Lebanon, all of the Arab regimes are police states where the local Mukhabarat remains the only real power that enforces law and order.

In any case, the conventional wisdom is that, unless the Americans exert political—as opposed to legal—pressure on the Iraqis to conclude the trial as soon as possible, with the desired result being the execution of Hussein, the trial of Saddam and his codefendants could extend for years to come, while Iraq descends into civil war and chaos, with sectarian gangs taking the law into their own hands.

Not surprisingly, some Americans are now having second thoughts about this trial. Some of them are probably hoping that Saddam will follow in the footsteps of the leading defendant in the Nuremberg Trials, Hermann Goering, and take his own life. Others, who are now searching for a "strong Iraqi leader" to help keep the country together, are perhaps even daydreaming about the Hirohito "model": A trip to Disneyland (or Davos) and the return of the "strong Iraqi leader" back to Baghdad.

—Leon T. Hadar

IN LATE JANUARY, I led a nine-member congressional delegation on a whirlwind trip to Switzerland, Poland, Rumania, Kosovo, and Morocco. In Bern, at the Embassy Country Team Briefing,

we were told that 90 percent of the Swiss were opposed to our occupation of Iraq. In Morocco, our ambassador happily told us that pro-American feelings had more than doubled to half the population, according to Pew Research Center figures. But then, he added, opposition to the war in Iraq was "almost unanimous." I have heard similar estimates in visits to countries in every part of the world since this unnecessary war started.

In Kosovo, where we still have 1,800 troops long after any fighting has stopped, we were escorted by a general of the Texas National Guard. His contingent of 1,300 Texas soldiers arrived just before Christmas and is scheduled to stay for about one year. Why is the Texas National Guard guarding Kosovo? The general said that their mission is to provide "a safe and secure environment" for the people there.

He did not add that this is "at great expense to the U.S. taxpayer" and that "this is police work the people of Kosovo should be doing themselves."

I asked him how long it had been since one of our soldiers had been killed or wounded there. He said that two had been injured in a riot in 2004. He did not seem to like it when I said that it appeared that his men are probably safer in Kosovo than in any big city in the United States.

In Bucharest, we were taken to the Palace of the Parliament, the second largest building in the world—astonishingly lavish, almost entirely filled with marble. The building was erected at a cost equivalent to three years' worth of the total GDP of Rumania at a time when many in that country had little to eat. (A few years ago, when our Government Reform Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives learned that the FBI had sent a father of four small children to prison for over 30 years for a murder the FBI knew he did not commit—because it might blow the cover of an informant—I decided that government bureaucrats can rationalize or justify almost anything. This unbelievably ornate edifice in Bucharest was just another of far too many confirmations of this belief.)

On the top floor of the Palace, we were briefed by officials on a program to fight crime in southeastern Europe. Since 1999, the United States has provided \$1.3 million per year for this effort, while the 12 participating European nations have contributed \$400,000—combined.

Our military is in almost every country, and, at every embassy I have been to over my 17 years in Congress, I have heard briefings from or talked with employees

of almost every federal department or major agency. Our embassy in Thailand now has 1,500 employees from all parts of our federal bureaucracy. World government is here—courtesy of, and financed by, Uncle Sam.

At least we received specific thank-yous for the \$400 million we have given to Rumania over the last few years and for the \$700 million we have given to Morocco—all through just one government channel, the Agency for International Development.

Liberals figured out years ago that foreign aid is unpopular, so they insist publicly (and falsely) that foreign aid accounts for only about one percent of our budget. What they don't say is that we are now providing aid through almost every department and agency and spending several hundreds of billions of dollars in other countries each year. We have spent \$300 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan in just the last three years—most of it in foreign aid. It is no criticism of our soldiers to say that the Department of Defense is now, in reality, the Department of Foreign Aid. Unfortunately, with an almost nine-trillion-dollar national debt, huge deficits with no end in sight, and the impending retirement of millions of baby boomers, those fine soldiers are go-

ing to see the pensions they are counting on (and other programs and pensions) cut drastically a few years from now.

Anyone who believes the U.S. Congress should start putting our own people first is scornfully branded an isolationist. Those who resort to such name calling, however, are avoiding a discussion on the merits of our foreign policy. Ironically, our interventionist policies have brought about more isolation than anything those who believe in putting America first have ever done.

We can be friends with other nations through trade, tourism, and cultural and educational exchanges without intervening in all sorts of political, religious, or ethnic disputes around the world.

Many government policies in recent years have given us a bland, homogenized society in the United States. Now, with the liberal, elitist, one-world activities of our federal government, we are exporting this bland, homogenized society around the world. Liberals have always loved the word *diversity*. But we would have more diversity around the world if we encouraged people in other countries to celebrate their own heritage and culture.

And the United States would be a better and far more interesting place if our government would stop trying to run the

world and, instead, would allow Americans to keep more of their own money and let them celebrate more of their own unique local culture and heritage before it disappears.

—The Hon. John J. Duncan, Jr.

OBITER DICTA: Our poet this month is **Richard Moore** from Belmont, Massachusetts. Mr. Moore is the author of nine books of poetry, as well as translations of Plautus and Euripides, a book of literary essays, and a novel, *The Investigator*. His most recent book of verse, *The Naked Scarecrow*, was published by the Truman State University Press in 2000. Mr. Moore conducts The Poetry Exchange in the Harvard COOP and frequently gives readings in the Boston area.

Our cover and interior art are provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

Additional interior art is provided by **Elizabeth Wolf** and **Nicholas Garrie**. Miss Wolf received her B.F.A. from the School of Art at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and resides in Chicago. Mr. Garrie, who works in a variety of media, hails from Rockford.

The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.

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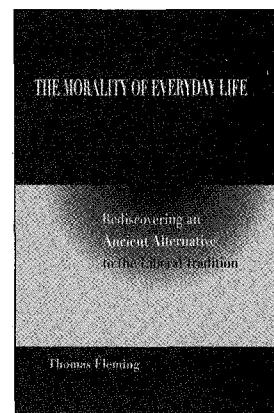
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—Ray Olson
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New Wine in Old Bottles

Suppose a wife is dying or has been lying for years in a coma: Who has ultimate authority to decide what medical treatments will be used to prolong or not to prolong her life? Suppose a child of divorced parents is taken out of the country by his mother, who then dies, leaving the child with her family: To whom does the child belong—the father, or the grandparents? Suppose a teenage boy is running wild, and his school does nothing to prevent him from leaving the campus or from taking drugs during lunch break: Should the parents be held liable for his truancy? Or, if they tie him to his bed at night, should they be prosecuted for child abuse? Suppose a married woman gets the religion of individual fulfillment and leaves her faithful husband: Who should get the kids? And, if the answer is the wife, is the husband responsible for alimony or child support?

Suppose a 16-year-old girl is found pregnant by her boyfriend: Who (in a society that has legalized prenatal infanticide) should have the power to decide whether or not to end the pregnancy—the mother, the grandparents, a doctor, or the state? Suppose an infertile couple has tried various forms of artificial procreation before getting divorced, and both frozen sperm and embryos remain: Who decides on the disposition of either or both? Suppose two lesbians have arranged for one of them to be impregnated by the other's brother: In the event of a separation, should the pseudofather (that is, the aunt) have visitation rights?

Each of these instances is based on a somewhat simplified version of a case that has been widely reported in the news. Each raises a number of questions about the nature of marriage and the relationship of family members to one another and to the state. In the old, pre-revolutionary world, the answer to each would have been transparent. In the last case, the Old World had a simple answer: A lesbian aunt would only have the right to be punished for her perversity. Wrong has no rights.

The case of the frozen embryos is more complex, since the technology is new. Nonetheless, there is a clear answer. In any Christian society, all forms of artificial procreation (and contraception) would be

illicit, and divorce would be restricted to a very few extreme cases. However, in a divorce case, authority over children belonged almost automatically to the father as head of the family. The case of the minor daughter wanting an abortion is simpler: As her parents' dependent, her marriage would be arranged by them, and, as long as she was single, she remained subject to their authority. Of course, abortion was illegal, but no medical procedure would have been performed on a dependent child without permission of her parents.

Parents, before the revolution, were responsible for their children's misdemeanors and torts, but they had the corresponding power to decide what form of education and punishment they received. A father's authority over his children trumped all others, and, since man and wife were one in the eyes of the law, he alone had the moral and legal authority to make important decisions about his wife. Although medical technology has made great strides since the revolution, the basic moral facts have not changed. In the old, pre-revolutionary world, lines of authority had to be clear, because any ambiguity in the law invites the officers of the state—judges, social workers, legislators—to make decisions for which they (unlike the family members) will pay no consequences. (For corroborative details, you will have to read my next book.)

The choice in each of these cases is not really between man and wife, parent and child, husband and in-laws, but between the family and the state. Today, the vast host of problems once settled within families are now resolved by judges. From the pre-revolutionary point of view, it hardly matters whether such cases are judged fairly or sensibly, because the wrong parties have been empowered to make the decision.

The sexual revolution is coming to an end, and it is clear that the revolutionaries have won. Naturally, there are a few pockets of resistance here and there, but the clerical sex-abuse scandal—some of it manufactured by the media—is finishing off whatever residual power the Church had to discipline the morals of hedonist Americans, while, judging by their books, movies, and TV shows, conservative Prot-



estants, even as they are repudiating secular humanism, are rushing to embrace the modern world. Many evangelicals express their capitulation every week, dancing in the aisles before the god of the big screen, and no serious Christian who has watched the Trinity Broadcasting Network, with its fake news shows, its phony history and just-so theology (to say nothing of Jan the big-haired Barbie with a Medusa grin carved onto her enameled face) can expect to find allies among the sentimentalized and pop-addled members of its viewing audience.

The evidence of our defeat is all around us and hardly needs statistical documentation on rates of divorce, illegitimacy, abortion, contraception, and artificial procreation. However, there are more dismal facts that can only be gathered anecdotally. Of the conservative Christian families we know, what proportion of their children are lost to the revolution? A fourth? A third? Half? In some cases, it is more than half. Until we have grown children ourselves, we may be tempted to blame the parents. When my college roommate, whom I have not seen in decades, and I were recently swapping family anecdotes, he opined that one sane kid out of four, in this world, is not a bad fraction.

The revolution that made us who we are began during the great revolt against Christianity known as the Renaissance, and it entered an acute phase with the French Revolution. Although it has taken many forms and aimed at so varied a set of targets—monarchy, aristocracy, the Catholic Church (then all Christianity), classical education, political liberty, and free enterprise—that it was hard to discern a pattern, the revolution has hardly ever deviated from its most basic goal: the liberation of what one of the most virulent revolutionaries termed the *libido*. From the erotic escapades of Lorenzo de Medici to the orgies in the Palais

Royal in 18th-century Paris to the efforts of D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley to tear down the last barriers, sexual revolutionaries have devoted themselves to destroying Christian marriage.

Some of the rebels (e.g., Lorenzo) thought they were reviving the pagan morality of the ancient world, which they mistakenly regarded as a golden age of sexual license; for others (Rousseau and the French orgiasts), it was a return to the natural innocence of primitive society. Marx and Engels went further, arguing that the family, just as much as private property and the state, was the result of a patriarchal *coup d'état*. And while Engels talked the talk (as author of *The Family, Private Property, and the State*), Marx walked the walk, siring bastards he persuaded Engels to acknowledge.

I do not know if either Marx or Engels believed in the potted paleohistory they had borrowed from L.H. Morgan, but they saw the utility of such a myth. If society, such as it still survived in the Victorian era, was to be broken down and reconstituted, the loyalties engendered in family life presented the greatest obstacle, and, of those loyalties, the most troublesome—for socialists and sexual rebels alike—is the bond of Christian marriage. Although Victorian morals were by no means as strict as the queen would have liked, marriage was serious business, in both England and the United States, and divorce was difficult. In antebellum South Carolina, to take one example, divorce was virtually impossible, and, although the Reconstruction government passed a very liberal divorce law, the state, very soon after recovering self-government in 1876, restored the old law.

In this age when a wife may repudiate her husband on the grounds of boredom and children are treated as wards of the state, it may be difficult to understand the Marxist animosity toward the family. In the early years of the Soviet Union, however, Alexandra Kollontai realized that traditional marriage and the autonomous family were adamant barriers against the revolutionary state. As a shrewd feminist, she understood well that the state subsidies for maternity and child-rearing being introduced in bourgeois European states were a first step toward the ultimate goal: "the transfer of the task of caring for the new generation, so precious to mankind, from the shoulders of private, individual parents to the whole community."

For all her drippy talk of women's liberation and taste for bad fiction, Kollontai

had a clear head, and she realized that liberalized marriage laws were undermining bourgeois society:

The attempt by the middle-class intelligentsia to replace indissoluble marriage by the freer, more easily broken ties of civil marriage destroys the essential basis of the social stability of the bourgeoisie. It destroys the monogamous, property-orientated family. On the other hand, a greater fluidity in relationships between the sexes coincides with and is even the indirect result of one of the basic tasks of the working class. The rejection of the element of "submission" in marriage is going to destroy the last artificial ties of the bourgeois family.

Although she was rarely bold enough to hold up the fornicating female as an ideal, her advocacy of female equality in all spheres of life was an implicit argument for sexual freedom, and her fiction, though far from pornographic, can be read as an anthem to sex without ties or tears. Though Lenin himself advocated freedom of love—though not the freedom to wallow in the erotic gutter—Kollontai's movement of sexual liberation antagonized the unenlightened Russian peasants. It was also an invitation to a perpetual cultural revolution that threatened the power structure of the dictatorship he worked so hard to establish. Lenin and Stalin contented themselves with destroying the power of extended families and relied on the nuclear family to carry out the basic functions of nursing, feeding, and clothing children, preparing them for the state institutions that would make them subservient little communists. Kollontai grudgingly acquiesced, but, as a potentially dangerous "left-communist," she was forced to spend her later years outside the Soviet Union. Officially, she was a diplomat, though her position more resembled that of an exile.

Conservative Christians, waxing hysterical on the subject of Kollontai as a communist sexual revolutionary, have missed her significance. While it is all too true that sexual morality collapsed in the communist world, it was only in the West that she could openly preach the sexual revolution, and it is in the West where the revolution has scored its greatest triumphs: In the East, Christians knew the state was the enemy of their Faith and of their families. Here in the United States, conservative

Christians continue to look to their government to defend their religion and support their families. This was abundantly clear in the sad case of Mrs. Schiavo.

Perhaps, before the autopsy, there was some room for doubt about her prospects (though no competent physician who examined her thought so), and there was good reason to suspect the motives of Mr. Schiavo, but the continuing campaign to use this poor dead woman as a symbol is disgraceful. As conservatives are casting the argument, Mrs. Schiavo was the victim of judges and politicians who promote euthanasia, and her death represents a failure to protect the civil rights of disabled Americans. Well, which is it? They cannot in good conscience denounce the power of judges and politicians and, at the same time, demand an increase in the government's power to interfere in family life.

The phrase most commonly used by Christian activists is that we should not let Mrs. Schiavo "die in vain." We hear the same sort of language from the parents of soldiers killed in Iraq. I can well understand a Marxist revolutionary talking this way—he has no hope of a better life to come—but it is, surely, strange language for Christians to use. Who are we to judge who has lived, much less died, in vain? Do we die in vain if we cannot serve as poster child for global democracy or the rights of the disabled? Is there no other (not to say higher) dimension to human life but politics? If "dying in vain" means going to the grave without accomplishing much or attracting public attention, nearly everybody who does not win an Oscar, a Grammy, or a Super Bowl ring dies in vain. Do these people know what they are saying? Do they care?

Hard cases do not inevitably make bad law, but when ordinary people, ignorant of their own traditions, turn to government as the final arbiter of problems within the family, they are acting out the scenario scripted by sexual revolutionaries such as Alexandra Kollontai, for whom fornication was only a means to an end, and the end was a socialist state in which the family was only a holding pen for the working cattle. Conservatives, distracted by the pornographic ripples on the pond's surface, fail to see the more dangerous beasts swimming in the depths. The Devil cannot enter the house without an invitation, and, in denigrating the traditional authority of husbands and fathers and betraying it to the post-Christian state, they have invited a whole legion of devils to possess what is left of the Christian family. ◊

Pastoral
by Richard Moore

How beautifully the pond lies
luminescent in the evening,
delicately holding the last light
as mounds of lawn, hugging it,
and foliage deepen into shadow —

until on high giant man-lights wink,
blink, and glare. Criminals and Satan
hate light; so now our suburb,
lush and lovely, lies like Diana
surrounded by those garish hounds.

“Virginity must be protected,”
a burglar alarm shrieks, tripping.
The landscape’s swallowed in its
convulsions, tedious and ugly
as Diana’s vision of mankind.

The Bright Ones
by Richard Moore

Trees tossing on the windy hilltop,
where the sun just went, transmit its glare
with such a brilliant scintillance,

one has to compare them to the glittery
effects of *Startrek*, pinball machines,
or those old bubbly Wurlitzer jukeboxes —

things long-gone — dead as the long-dead Nile:

mile after mile aglitter with temples,
Pharaohs, golden boys, tombed wonders,
conquerors . . . still . . . What jewels!

But, Tut, look! Trees there, age-old
in seedy decay, grow dull and vague,
slip from us, naked into the night.

Sins of Omission

by Roger D. McGrath

Black Sheep One

"Thou shalt not honor a white man," says the first commandment of the politically correct—unless, of course, the white man in question is hastening the destruction of Western civilization or, perhaps, preserving the habitat of the pupfish. A recent example of dishonoring an American hero occurred at the University of Washington, when a student senator, Andrew Everett, proposed that a memorial be erected on campus in memory of Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, a graduate of the University of Washington and a Medal of Honor recipient.

Most of the student senate had never heard of Boyington. When Everett described the famous Marine ace, several senators were horrified. "Is it appropriate to honor a person who killed other people?" cried sophomore Jill Edwards. Furthermore, she "didn't believe a member of the Marine Corps was an example of the sort of person the University of Washington wanted to produce." Senior Ashley Miller added that "many monuments at the University of Washington already commemorate rich white men."

Andrew Everett and his supporters argued in vain that Boyington's accomplishments and decorations demanded an individual monument in his honor. The student senate found time before the session was adjourned, however, for the following announcements: The GBLTC (Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender Commission) was having auditions for the drag show; the Innocence Project Northwest was having a screening at the Burke Museum on the death penalty; the annual Human Rights Film Festival would be running the following week; and tickets for the *Vagina Monologues* were currently on sale at the Husky Union Building ticket office.

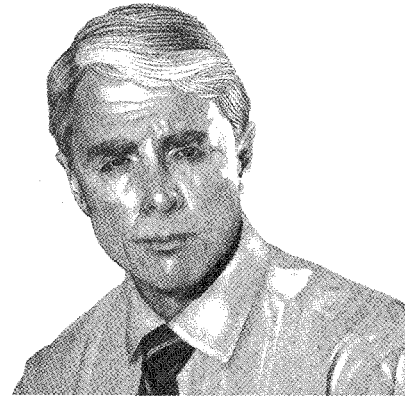
When Everett e-mailed word about the debate to a local radio talk-show host, reporters were soon on campus interviewing Huskies about the proposed monument to Boyington. Most revealing, and most disheartening, was the common refrain, "Who's Pappy Boyington?" After dozens of students seemed bewildered when questioned about the Medal of Honor alumnus of their school, one reporter finally located an ROTC student who said that Boyington was a flier but

could offer nothing more. At least Boyington and the monument became a topic of discussion on campus.

That Pappy Boyington has disappeared down the memory hole is especially surprising because he was not only one of America's most famous World War II heroes and the author of a best-selling autobiography but the subject of a television series, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, which ran for two seasons during the mid-1970's. Starring Bob Conrad as Pappy Boyington, the series had its moments, especially during the first season, when most of the episodes were based on actual events and missions of VMF 214. Pappy Boyington himself served as consultant and technical advisor for the program.

Boyington may have been white, but he certainly wasn't rich. He never knew his real father, a dentist who divorced Boyington's mother when he was still an infant. His stepfather and his mother were heavy drinkers who never made more than modest incomes. Boyington liked to say that he was mostly Irish with a little Sioux Indian on his mother's side, so his own alcoholism was a genetic inevitability. When the recent flap at the University of Washington erupted, several Boyington supporters mentioned that he was part-Sioux, and one even called him a Sioux Indian, evidently hoping to elicit some p.c. sympathy. However, Boyington's biographer, Bruce Gamble, in a scholarly, comprehensive, and thoroughly documented work, *Black Sheep One* (2000), could find no evidence of Sioux or any other Indian blood.

More importantly, though, as a warrior, Boyington was second to none. After working his way through the University of Washington, living hand-to-mouth, he took his degree in aeronautical engineering to Boeing and got a job as a draftsman. While there, he was accepted into the Marines' aviation-cadet program. He got through the program with a less than remarkable record, even failing and having to repeat more than one check ride. What no one could test for, though, is what he had in spades—a killer instinct and an uncanny ability to size up an opponent quickly. He had been the Pacific Northwest middleweight wrestling



champion in college and was known for instantly identifying and exploiting weaknesses in opponents with a vicious ferocity. He would soon be doing so in the skies over Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Boyington first saw combat flying a P-40 with the Flying Tigers. He returned home with six kills, but it took him several months of letter writing and finagling to get himself reinstated in the Marine Corps without losing rank or seniority, as had been promised those who had resigned to serve with the Flying Tigers. By September 1943, he was commanding VMF 214, a squadron of Corsairs based in the Solomons. Since he was in his early 30's and most of his boys, in their early 20's, he was "Pappy." Several favored naming the squadron "Boyington's Bastards," but "Black Sheep" was eventually chosen as more appropriate for press releases.

Boyington's experience, skill, courage, and fraternal relationship with his pilots made him a leader his aviators would follow anywhere. He picked off Japanese planes by the twos and threes and was decorated with the Navy Cross. By January 1944, his squadron had gunned down more than 100 enemy aircraft, and Boyington was on the verge of breaking Joe Foss's record of 26. Boyington got the record and added a 28th kill before he was shot down in a furious fight with two-dozen Zeros. Picked up by a Japanese submarine, he was eventually taken to Japan, where he endured interrogations, beatings, and torture until the end of the war. When he finally returned home, President Truman hung the Medal of Honor around his neck. The Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross, the leading ace in Marine Corps history, a survivor of a Japanese torture camp, and the author of a best-selling autobiography—but that was not enough (or perhaps too much) for the august student senate at the University of Washington. ©

The Perpetual Family

From Rome to Las Vegas to Blackheath and Back

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

*“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve;
because she was the mother of all living.”*

—Genesis 3:20

The first time I ever visited Saint Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, it was in the company of a pretty Irish-American girl from Massachusetts named Evelyn. Her father was some kind of Democratic politician back home. She and I were just beginning a semester abroad. She was art history; I was classics. We were both only 19. All the way over, as we walked down on a sweltering August afternoon from Monteverde Vecchio through the Janiculum park, she had been arguing with me about contraception and population control and not wanting children. Her ideas were definitely not papal. As we were about to enter the vestibule, I told her that I really would rather not hear her contradicting our Faith just here, and to wait till we were in a bar. She laughed agreeably and said that it seemed a little sacrilegious to her, too. Silently, then, we walked up toward the *confessio*. When I went over to kiss the foot of Saint Peter’s image, she said, “I guess you would like to be alone; I’ll meet you on the roof.” *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him* (Genesis 2:18).

When we met later, we stood side by side, admiring the view of the City. She opened her canvas bag and brought out an apple and offered it to me with an ironic little smile. Mercifully, I caught the joke in time and gave it back to her, as I quipped, “This son of Adam is not going to take an apple from a girl named Evelyn.” She was duly charmed and said “*touché*.” The rest of the semester she kept up the debate, made all the more urgent when she found out that I wanted to be a priest.

In December, we were all invited to the house of some nice Italian Jewish kids, who were also classics students, for a party. The house had a kind of lurid basement disco complete with black-velvet walls and a strobe light. As the song “Upside Down (You Turn Me)” was booming, she told me, “Someday I hope you have some little children of your own just like you.” *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth* (Genesis 1:28). My confessor, a wily, witty, and sometimes severe Franciscan, chuckled when he heard the story of the sweet girl’s circumstantial conversion to procreation and added, “I guess contraception and population control are trumped for the young lady by celibacy. Perhaps she is making some slow spiritual progress. At least she now sees the good of nature.”

Why is it that Christian culture has always promoted with

equal zeal fruitful families and vowed virginity? And what does this tell us about the politicians and their barren offspring who worked first for contraception (such as Prescott Bush, first treasurer of Planned Parenthood), and then no-fault divorce (such as Ronald Reagan, as governor of California), and now “civil unions”? The answers to these questions take us back to the essence of our existence, to concerns that are more primal than political, more final than fiscal.

Aquinas, in his lesser *Summa contra Gentiles*, points out, following Aristotle, that corruptible things, beings that wear out and die, that pass away, can exist forever only by generation, by reproducing their kind. Perpetual existence is the purpose of human procreation, the union of man and woman. Saint Thomas points out that, at present, this perpetuity is threefold: *perpetuitas speciei*, the continuation of our kind; *perpetuitas populi*, the continuation of a people in a state; and *perpetuitas ecclesiae*, the continuation of the society of the faithful. In this way, matrimony fulfills a duty of nature, of polity, and of grace. Thus, the family precedes the state as its foundation, constitutes the state as its subject, and transcends it as a living sign of union with God, an espousal which does not end in death.

Adam and Evelyn on their outings, created from the beginning male and female, inhabitants of eternal Rome, Christians willingly or unwillingly, are a cautionary parable of these three perpetuities. I have never been to Las Vegas, except to change planes at the airport, but I could imagine—but not too vividly, of course—a contrary parable (perhaps taking place at Caesar’s Palace) of three merely temporary arrangements: fruitless sex by the hour, monitored by the health department; weddings dissolvable at will with the next day’s hangover; and all payable in chips symbolic of very fleeting fortune—and all of this brought to you by the “laws” of the “state” of Nevada. What do these symbolize in less garish terms? Contraception, divorce, and economic materialism endorsed and promoted by government.

These are equivocal uses of words, lying paradoxes, clean contrary to their real meanings, doublespeak: “sex” that has nothing to do with being male or female; “marriage” and “family” impermanent and indifferent of offspring; “happiness” in corruptible things; and a “republic” that promotes not the common good but only individual economic empowerment to obtain all these. Here is the hermeneutic of Humpty Dumpty, as our own Queen Mother Barbara told the Grand Old Party in 1992: “Family means to us whatever it means to you.” Votes,

*Father Hugh is prior of St. Michael’s Abbey
in Trabuco Canyon, California.*

not vows, are what constitute such a society.

It is too late to do much with such a state as ours (although it is hard to fault the good people who try); it will follow its inevitable course toward complete corruption. Perpetual nature remains, and the perpetual Church remains. What, then, shall we noble savages and Christians do? In answer, allow me to tell another autobiographical parable. Some years ago, I was invited with my mother to the wedding of the son of some old family friends. It was to be a civil ceremony in the garden of the bride's sister. I went along, willingly enough. The officiant was a famous judge later impeached and removed from office by the variable ire of the citizens of California. She read from Solomon's Canticle, and a gospel choir sang "Tell Me What Love Is." After the contract was duly witnessed, the bride's father came over to me and said, "Father, I'm so glad you're here; it means so much to my wife and me that a religious was present," and, he sheepishly added, "After all, this is her third." Later, I asked my mother why she hadn't informed me of this detail, and, admitting the cunning of Eve, she said in her soft Southern tones, "If I had told you, you wouldn't have come to the ceremony, and the reception is in the same place, so you wouldn't have come to anything."

The churches have always recognized the state's interest in marriage and family. When modern states introduced civil marriage, they barely objected, as long as her children were married with a cleric's blessing, and, often enough, not even this was required. In the case of Catholics in the United States, for example, outside of the former French and Spanish possessions, a church wedding was not canonically obligatory until 1907. A marriage valid in civil law was reckoned as juridically equivalent to marriage witnessed by an ecclesiastic. At present in our own country, and in many others, ministers of the Gospel are also licensed officers of the state for the purposes of witnessing marriage vows. This arrangement was gladly accepted at least as a remaining element of a sound social order in which the state and the Church cooperated with a common interest in the goods of marriage and family life. Take as an example of this shared concern a Christian couple I know of who were *denied* a divorce in the late 1930's and remained together for over 50 years. They were everlastingly grateful to the judge, who told them that they had made promises before God and that they had not been married long enough to show any reasonable grounds for a dissolution.

As they say, "That was then, this is now." At the point when the state stopped showing an interest in the stability of marriage—that is, with the legalization of contraception and the granting of divorces at will—it should have been clear that the Church's ministers were no longer witnessing the same thing as before, at least from the state's point of view. What the state calls marriage has not been, for some time now, anything of the kind. If anyone were inclined to dispute this illation, the looming possibility and actuality in some places of "marriage" between persons of the same sex render it incontrovertible.

I offer a pastoral solution which would edify and instruct the faithful. I base it on my parabolic reflections on the consolation my mere presence in Roman collar offered the poor parents of the thrice-wedded California politico (-ca?). In every state where these unions are ratified, the hierarchy of those churches still professing the truth about marriage and family could voluntarily renounce the status of their min-

isters as officers of the state in witnessing marriages. The faithful would still have to have their marriages blessed by the Church, but we could stop dealing in marriage licenses altogether, and tell the couple to have a civil ceremony to protect their legal rights and those of their offspring as they need to, but make it clear that the two unions are at present entirely different, because of the abdication by the state of its duty toward marriage. Let Christians in Vermont, for example, know that the Church's ministers refuse to be equated with the magistrates of the Decapolis. Clerical complacency at the legal equivalence of Christian marriage (and I'm sure Orthodox rabbis would agree with me as well) with civil unions reminds one of Lot offering his daughters to the citizens of Sodom to protect his angelic guests. Justify it if you need to, but it will not stop the city from burning. This may well be a privilege the Church can do without. As a man under authority myself, I offer this suggestion *salvo meliori iudicio* and with all due respect. It is at least helpful to contemplate such a possible and prophetic line of action, since some action is needful in any case.



"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Corinthians 7:29). There is a line of action more radical than the one just described, but easier to realize, since it is already in place, requiring no change in laws civil or ecclesiastical. Remember, it was the Pauline challenge of celibacy that moved dear Evelyn to see the value of offspring, if only in the case of the present writer. This challenge is eschatological—that is, it has to do with the imminent consummation of all things into the eternal Kingdom of God, the *lux perpetua* beyond the bodily corruption that procreation overcomes in time but is not able to conquer in eternity. These last and everlasting things are, for the believer in the world of the Bible, and to a certain extent even for the pagan if he is a metaphysician, always upon us; they direct our world of generation and corruption to an incorruptible and eternal society of the blessed, "for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

It is easy to forget, because we may never have learned it, that Henry's divorce coincided with the dissolution of the monasteries, that the secular marriage of the *sans-culottes* went along with abrogation of the civil effects of monastic vows and then

the suppression and spoliation of religious orders. Our Constitution, far more just than that of the Tudors or the Jacobins, has never claimed any jurisdiction over the vows of religion. They do not interest it. And why? Because our state is at best agnostic about our final destiny in the world to come, while the motivation for celibacy is the coming of that Kingdom which "will have no end."

In Christian civilization, well-populated monasteries have always inspired both large families and persecution by the worldly. This is the wholesome paradox of the Gospel, so unlike the poisonous paradoxes of contemporary consumer culture. The Lord promised it (Mark 10:29-30):

Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

A deep harmony of human sentiment underlies the apparent paradox: Both marriage and celibacy are an assertion of the desire for the perpetual. Marriage, as has been said, offers temporal perpetuity to nature, to states, and to religion. Celibacy is a sign of the eternal perpetuity of happiness beyond time.

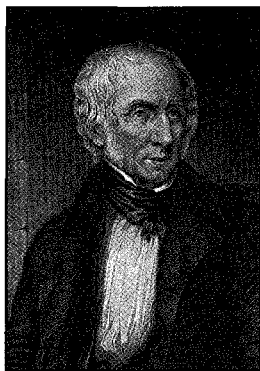
Pope Innocent V, who worked so hard to reconcile Guelf and Ghibelline, asserts the ultimate unity of marriage and monasticism in his elegant exegesis (so elegant, in fact, that it was long attributed to Aquinas) of Saint Paul's exhortation

given above—"the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none." In response to the objection that the Apostle's counsel seems to contradict the command to "be fruitful and multiply" of Genesis, he replies, "What is the final purpose of marriage, if not the completion of the number of the elect, which would the more swiftly be fulfilled were all to practice continence?" *Sub specie aeternitatis* marriage and celibacy serve the same end, and that under the same aspect; no paradox here at all, but an underlying identity.

I would never encourage imitation of the sans-culottism of the "red republicans" of France described above, but something of a moral peasants' revolt—English, not German—is in order, seeking not earthly redress in time but the possession and protection of things permanent and perpetual. This is a revolt that is nonviolent in the purest Aristotelian sense, because it is wholly in accord with the natural, whether created or Uncreated. Our secular lords at the hustings and in the media may promise us some consideration, but we cannot trust them to follow through any more than Richard II did—quite the contrary. Nature and nature's God are what remain to us. As "the time is short," let us foster chaste marriage and virginity. We need not fear the powerful, for the things we love are signs of incorruption and eternity, of certain and everlasting triumph. Ours can be, but with complete justice this time, John Ball's rhyme taken from the mystic celibate Richard Rolle with which the resistance began in 1381:

When Adam delved and Eve span,
who was then the gentleman?

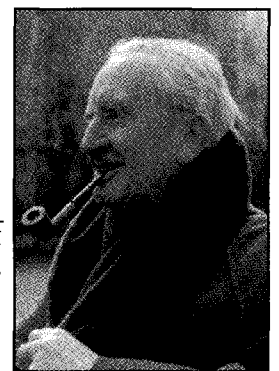
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Love on the Rocks

A New Covenant

by Aaron D. Wolf



Melanie Anderson

If George Barna, by far the most prominent head counter among American Christians, is correct, 35 percent of “born-again Christians” have experienced (to borrow from Tammy Wynette) “pure *h-e-double-l*.” A decade-long study on the Barna Group’s website, published first in 2004, reveals that, “among married born again Christians, 35% have experienced a divorce. That figure is identical to the outcome among married adults who are not born again: 35%.”

Near the end of his article, Barna clarifies that, by “born again,” he is referring to Christians who identified themselves as having made “a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today” and that, therefore, his data on “born agains” included Catholics and many Mainline Protestants. We thus learn that American Catholics (25 percent) are “less likely than Protestants [39 percent] to get divorced,” and that, on the Protestant side, Pentecostals (44 percent) are more likely to get divorced than are Presbyterians (28 percent).

This high level of *h-e-double-l* does not translate into a high level of moral guilt, however, as “a majority of both Protestants (58%) and Catholics (69%)” did not consider divorce in cases where one spouse had not committed adultery to be a sin.

“Ye are the light of the world,” Jesus told His disciples. “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” Thanks to Gov. John Winthrop and his many reinterpreters, the Massachusetts Bay Colony or New England or the Union or America or Greater Worldwide America has, at one time or another, been identified as that “shining City on a Hill” that would beam the light of . . . something on the earth. The high divorce rate in our *Magnalia Christi Americana* alone (to say nothing of our murder of the unborn or our approval of and participation in sodomy) shows this claim to be bogus.

It would be bogus anyway, however, since Jesus had the

Church and not the modern state in mind. But if the numbers cited above are any indication, the churches of America are failing to uphold the most basic Christian teachings on marriage, and the light that our churches are shining has grown fairly dim. (When is the last time you heard a red-hot, or even tepid, condemnation of divorce from a Sunday pulpit?) After all, in our democratized American church culture—irrespective of various dogmatic commitments regarding authority and polity—far too many voters or committee members or “givers” are divorced, and American pastors (so often treated as hirelings) have become the proverbial muzzled oxen.

So, with the churches falling down on the job, should we look to government to pick up the slack? In this, the era of “compassionate conservatism,” when our President’s favorite mantra is that “government has a role to play,” some desperate folks seem to think that the modern state can help to turn the tide of rampant divorce, broken families, and pure *h-e-double-l*.

Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas is one of them. A former Southern Baptist minister, he has been Arkansas’ chief executive since 1996, when Jim Guy Tucker ignominiously resigned. In 2001, Governor Huckabee encouraged the passage of the state’s Covenant Marriage Act, which grants the citizens of the Land of Opportunity the option of subjecting themselves to a slightly more rigorous standard for marriage and divorce. Instead of a “standard” marriage, which is relatively easy to procure and can just as easily be dissolved—in the eyes of the state, *via* no-fault divorce—couples can opt for a *covenant marriage*. In addition, those already married can “convert” their marriage into a covenant one, by signing the requisite documents and following a standard procedure required of all those seeking a covenant marriage.

That procedure involves counseling. According to the law,

A declaration of intent to contract a covenant marriage

Aaron D. Wolf is Chronicles’ associate editor.

shall contain . . . the following: . . . An affidavit by the parties that they have received authorized counseling which shall include a discussion of the seriousness of covenant marriage, communication of the fact that a covenant marriage is a commitment for life, a discussion of the obligation to seek marital counseling in times of marital difficulties, and a discussion of the exclusive grounds for legally terminating a covenant marriage by divorce.

The law goes on to specify that

“Authorized counseling” means marital counseling provided by a priest, minister, rabbi, clerk of the Society of Friends, any clergy member of any religious sect, or a “licensed professional counselor,” “licensed associate counselor,” “licensed marriage and family therapist,” “licensed clinical psychologist,” or “licensed associate marriage and family therapist” . . .

According to researchers Joseph Lee Rodgers, Paul A. Nakonezny, and Robert D. Shull, no-fault divorces account for as many as “57,000 extra divorces” per year in the United States. Huckabee’s Covenant Marriage Law seeks to address this trend, which began in 1969 when Ronald Reagan (then governor of California) signed the first no-fault divorce law, by eliminating it from consideration. A husband or wife who has procured a covenant marriage in the state of Arkansas may only divorce if the other spouse has committed adultery or a “felony or other infamous crime”; physically or sexually abused the innocent spouse or one of their children; or lived “separately and apart continuously” for at least two years.

The covenant-marriage movement began in the late 1990’s under the direction of Southern Baptist pastor Phil Waugh. Pastor Phil had worked for the Southern Baptist Convention’s Sunday School Board before he brought together “19 marriage and family ministries and Christian organizations” to launch the movement in 1999. Then, in 2001, “God revealed to him that He remembered the vows they had made and the covenant He had made with them. There was no question in [Phil’s] heart or mind that God called [Phil and his wife] out to serve as the Executive Directors for the Covenant Marriage Movement.”

Pastor Phil’s vision was “to join hands and hearts in transforming the present divorce culture, in which they live, to a covenant marriage culture through which He can be glorified.” His strategy was two-pronged: On one hand, he would encourage churches to promote extralegal covenant marriages within their own congregations and denominations—in other words, more focused premarital counseling and greater emphasis on the permanence of marriage vows, culminating in the signature of a covenant-marriage contract (with no legal status); on the other, he would call Christians to exert pressure on state legislatures to enact laws that would make the vows of covenant marriage legally binding.

Despite these intentions, as well as the support of a growing number of largely evangelical pro-family organizations, the covenant-marriage movement had a difficult time gaining momentum. Only Arkansas, Louisiana, and Arizona were able to get covenant-marriage laws on the books, though similar bills were unsuccessfully introduced in the legislatures of Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Mis-

issippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Georgia, New Mexico, California, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon, Nebraska, Tennessee, Washington, and Florida.

Then, on Valentine’s Day (when else?) 2005, Governor Huckabee attempted to infuse the movement with new life by organizing and participating in an event that overshot his own expectations. One year after homosexuals began flocking to Sodom-on-the-Bay’s city hall to participate in Mayor Gavin Newsom’s “Gay Marriage” Extravaganza!, couples of a different stripe were flocking to Little Rock’s Alltel Arena to participate in the Arkansas Celebration of Marriage, in which Governor Huckabee and his wife, Janet, “converted” their union into a covenant marriage. A crowd of over 8,000 was in attendance for this “extraordinary evening” (according to p.r. materials). Speakers for this made-for-television event included Dr. Crawford Loritts, host of *Living a Legacy*; Dennis Rainey, host of *Family Life Today*; and Rabbi Daniel Lapin of Toward Tradition (an organization that, among other things, helps to galvanize dispensationalist support for Israel and which, according to the *Washington Post*, helped to funnel money from Jack Abramoff to the wife of an aide of Tom DeLay). And the audience was treated to the inspirational song stylings of “five-time Grammy winner CeCe Winans.”

According to Governor Huckabee’s website, the event was, as you might imagine, an unqualified success. The clerk of Arkansas’ Pulaski County, Pat O’Brien, who performed the ceremony, claimed that, following the event, “his office had processed more Covenant Marriages in one month than it had in the previous four years.”

That assessment is a bit misleading. Over the three-plus years preceding that “one month,” less than one percent of Arkansans had opted for covenant marriage. And, while the figure is slightly higher in Louisiana and Arizona, sadly, the divorce rate has not dropped in any of those states. While Pastor Phil claims that 50,000 couples have joined the covenant-marriage movement and that he enjoys the support of 65 pro-family organizations or ministries, covenant marriage seems dead in the water.

Pastor Phil is pressing on, though, by attempting to cement the identity of the Sunday nearest Valentine’s Day as “Covenant Marriage Sunday.” (That sounds more relevant than Septuagesima, doesn’t it?) If your church is willing, an entire packet of covenant-marriage materials awaits, including various books, recordings, and other products, as well as a ledger of covenant-marriage certificates. During the month of February of this year, Governor Huckabee devoted his weekly radio broadcast to the promotion of Covenant Marriage Sunday, playing excerpts from the speeches delivered at the Arkansas Celebration of Marriage.

That included Rabbi Lapin’s address, broadcast on February 11, in which he offers several tools for maintaining a healthy marriage. Drawing our attention to Genesis, he enjoins us

to remember that God created man and woman, and he taught them the principle of marriage before there were any children. And so, he brings them together, Adam and Eve, and he says to them—what’s the first thing he says? “Go to synagogue and church regularly every week”? Nope. Does he say “make sure you tithe and give ten percent of your income to charity”? Not there he doesn’t. What’s the very first thing he says? He

says “be together, form a marriage, love one another and then have children and fill the earth.” My second tool for the covenant of marriage is that we are spouses before we are parents. And by far the greatest gift that you can bestow on children is a pair of parents whose eyes both light up when the other walks into a room.

In this statement, we have underscored for us many of the things that are wrong with the covenant-marriage movement. Rabbi Lapin has the facts wrong, for starters. According to Genesis 1, the very first thing that God said after forming Eve and giving her to Adam was, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” He never tells them to “be together” or to fix the love light in their eyes as prerequisite for having children. Instead, they are to bear God’s image—as Creator, through procreation; and, as Sovereign of all things, by subduing the earth and ruling over it. Consequently, when they rebel against God, the Curse befits their crime: Adam must struggle to till a rebellious soil full of weeds, and Eve must travail to fill her primary (though not only) function as helpmeet. Nonetheless, even after the Curse, God repeats His blessing (“Be fruitful”) and commandment (“and multiply”) to Noah.

Children factor very little into today’s “covenant marriage,” though they do, at least, qualify as objects of abuse necessary to obtain a divorce. Nowhere in the required “qualified counseling” is a commitment to forswear contraception or to affirm that, from the foundation of the world, marriage has meant children (unless God intervenes). The Baptist or Catholic or Scientologist or Wiccan clergyman does not need to sign an affidavit indicating that he/she/it has taught the couple that a household in which the wife works outside of the home is more likely to experience a divorce, or that a couple that rejects the blessing of fertility is less likely to last. (Citing a study by Chicago School sociologist John Ermisch, Allan Carlson writes, in “World Population Trends and the Retreat From Marriage,” that “married mothers who are employed after giving birth are almost twice-as-likely to divorce as new mothers who do not work after bearing a child.” According to Ermisch, “having fewer children and having them later in one’s life suggests a tendency for the expected gains from marriage cooperation to decline. This suggests that a fall in fertility will increase divorce rates and reduce marriage rates.”)

Contraception also wars against what modern theologians call the unitive aspect of the marriage bed. Wives who are treated as mere receptacles for their husbands’ desires are not being shown a love that implies the “lifelong commitment” championed by the marriage covenanters. On the other hand, a couple that is open to having several children demonstrates to each other the permanence of their union—far more than “eyes that light up” will ever show.

It is precisely here that the state and the churches have conspired against the family—and the nation, as well. Fathers have little support from government in maintaining their roles as heads of households. The no-fault divorce revolution (1969) went hand-in-hand with the legalization of contraception (1965) and then abortion (1973). But before this, Protestant churches, one by one (beginning in 1930 at Lambeth) had laid down and died on the contraception issue, and the Catholic churches in the United States, by and large, have since had

little to say about their magisterium’s courageous upholding of the natural law and 2,000 years of Christian teaching.

All of this underscores the larger problem with covenant marriage. Government has no business defining holy matrimony, whether that means including the perversion of “monogamous” sodomites or the creation of a new sort of marriage that is harder to get out of and is sanctioned by state-approved counselors or clergy or gibbons. In regulating marriage, government bears witness to the natural law, established by God in Creation, which cannot be redefined. It exists *only* as a covenant, sealed by the sexual union of man and wife, from which children are the natural outcome.

We used to love large families and be
ashamed of divorce; we used to demand
more from our pastors and less from our
government. Now, the reverse is
true—but it does not have to be.

In the past, our people and our families were protected by our government, by which I do not mean the man behind the curtain in Washington, D.C. Divorce was nearly impossible. Trafficking contraceptives and abortion/infanticide were illegal; fathers could earn a decent living and were not insulted with offers of retraining at community college after learning that their jobs had been shipped overseas. Mothers could stay at home and rear their own children on their husband’s income. Family farms were not made worthless by government-subsidized agribusiness. Parents could refuse to spare the rod without fearing an investigation by child-protective services. And household incomes were not taxed to pay for the education, healthcare, and welfare of the illegal aliens who were stealing their jobs.

In the past, our churches—by which I do not mean Promise Keepers or Focus on the Family or the Christian Booksellers Association—had something to say about marriage. They called divorce a sin. They encouraged procreation and denounced contraception. They said, “Husbands love your wives,” and “wives, obey your husbands,” and “children, obey your parents”—without therapeutic and effeminate qualifiers. They did not need Governor Huckabee or Rabbi Lapin or Pastor Phil or anyone else to teach them that “marriage is for life,” or to invent a special kind of marriage for pro-family advocates, or to offer their people star-studded token ceremonies to “celebrate” what God created in the Garden.

In the past, we were a people—or, rather, peoples—with our own families, clans, governments, and churches. We used to love large families and be ashamed of divorce; we used to demand more from our pastors and less from our government. Now, the reverse is true—but it does not have to be; for, unlike the prospect of eliminating no-fault divorce (or child abuse or evil itself) everywhere, repentance is within our reach. 

Rejecting Marriage

The Elephant in the Room

by Christopher J. Check

Remember “Elisa’s Law”? In 1996, New York Gov. George Pataki signed this legislation, which removed, in the words of then Speaker of the New York Assembly Sheldon Silver, “archaic confidentiality laws” pertaining to juvenile-court and medical records. The law also extended the period during which records of unfounded reports of child abuse were to be kept on file. Easier access to private records and an atmosphere encouraging anonymous tips were going to make it easier for child-protection specialists to fight abuse.

The inspiration for the law was the death of a six-year-old Manhattan girl, Elisa Izquierdo. In November 1995, Elisa’s crack-addled mother, Awilda Lopez, after subjecting the girl to starvation, humiliation, and torture, smashed her daughter’s head against a concrete wall. Lopez, who is now in jail, appears to have had children by at least three men. The man with whom she was cohabiting at the time of Elisa’s death was not the child’s father. In crafting Elisa’s Law, the New York State Assembly declared “that the deaths of children due to abuse, neglect and maltreatment despite the involvement of government agencies charged with protecting these children is intolerable and unacceptable.”

Ten years ago, the government agency that, in spite of its significant involvement in her life, failed to save Elisa Izquierdo was called the New York Child Welfare System. Today, it goes by the more antiseptic Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Other than that, it is not clear what has changed, much less improved, since the signing of Elisa’s Law.

Yet the cynical practice of naming laws after child victims continues with “Nixzmary’s Law,” named for a seven-year-old Brooklyn girl, Nixzmary Brown, whose horrifying ordeal at the hands of her mother’s boyfriend ended in her death last November. (See Mark G. Brennan’s piece in this issue for a full account of this tragedy.) The bipartisan sponsors of Nixzmary’s Law argue that stiffening the sentences for parents found guilty of murdering their children will deter such crimes. One of their colleagues, State Sen. Diane Savino, doubts it. She warns her fellow senators not to “console themselves for one second that [Nixzmary’s Law] will prevent child abuse and neglect.”

Small wonder that Savino is pessimistic. She served six years as a caseworker for ACS, doubtless remembers Elisa’s Law, and, if she has kept abreast of her old field, knows that child deaths from abuse or neglect in New York City have averaged about 30 per year for the past decade. “It’s a much bigger problem,” Savino says. “Some people should not have children.” She does not say which ones.

Christopher J. Check is the executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

Nor does the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “There is no single profile of a perpetrator of fatal child abuse,” they reported in 2004, although they emphasize that perpetrators rarely have high-school diplomas, often live below the poverty line, and “may have difficulty coping with stressful situations.”

Savino is right, of course; some people should not have children. They are called unmarried people.

Consider the domestic circumstances of the following victims—children who lost their lives within a few months of Nixzmary’s death. Each child had some kind of file with ACS.

Seven-year-old Sierra Roberts of Queens was, according to a January 2006 indictment, kneed in the abdomen by her father, Russell, causing her to die from ruptured bowels and internal lacerations. Sierra entered the world testing positive for cocaine. Her relationship with her mother, Mitchelena Hines of North Carolina, ended in the delivery room. After three years in foster care, during which her father received ACS-supervised “drug treatment and parent training,” Sierra was returned to her father’s custody. In 2003, she suffered a fractured spine; six months later, a broken leg. Two separate fractures, two separate emergency rooms. When asked by ACS caseworkers about these injuries, Russell Roberts claimed that Sierra’s spinal injury was the consequence of a fall. And her leg was broken, he maintained, when he fell down the stairs while carrying her. With the access to her medical records granted by Elisa’s Law, ACS found “no evidence of abuse or neglect.”

Dahquay Gillians was a 16-month-old Bedford-Stuyvesant boy who drowned in a scalding bath in November 2005. According to the *New York Daily News*, paramedics found the child naked and unconscious on the bare floor, with water in his lungs and burn blisters covering his groin. His mother, Tracina Vaughn, had a previous conviction for burning Dahquay’s older brother, Tramel, in the bathtub in May 2004, an incident that resulted in blisters over 80 percent of Tramel’s body. Tracina’s boyfriend (the father of neither boy) was present at the scene when paramedics arrived but responded to questions only with “Don’t ask me, ask the mother.”

Josiah Bunch, a one-year-old Brooklyn boy, died in December 2005. When an autopsy revealed blunt trauma to the child’s neck, his unmarried mother, Latifa, was charged. Latifa has two other children—one in foster care in New York; the other, in New Jersey. Caseworkers from ACS made 12 visits to check on Josiah Bunch during his only year on earth.

On the same day that Nixzmary Brown died, two-month-old Michael Segarra was found by a neighbor face down in his crib, dead and purple. Born with drugs in his system, Michael

and his single mother, Melissa, had been on the ACS watch list from his first to his last day.

Though the cause of Michael's death has not been determined, there appears to be no doubt about the January death of four-year-old Quachon Brown of the Bronx. His mother, Alicia Smith, 26, and her boyfriend, Jose Caldarone, 18, have been charged with manslaughter and second-degree murder, respectively. Alicia told police that a television set fell on her son. An autopsy revealed atrophied leg muscles, a fractured skull, bruises consistent with abuse, and a lacerated liver. When Alicia abandoned her children and went to Atlantic City last June, Quachon and his five siblings were removed by ACS from the filthy apartment where six children shared two beds. Alicia told police that she and the children's grandmother had miscommunicated concerning babysitting arrangements. Caldarone is not the boy's father—though, according to police, he might be the father of three of Quachon's siblings. Jose and Alicia did, in fact, own a 60-inch television set.

The public outcry over these tragedies has focused on the failure of the New York City ACS. Public officials have responded with investigations and by reopening cases. New caseworkers are being hired, while other caseworkers and their supervisors are receiving unpaid suspensions pending the outcome of investigations. At least two top-level administrators have been relieved of authority. Assistant Commissioner Olivia Brown, who supervised the ACS field offices in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island, lost her title and now performs "administrative functions." (Recent arrests of ACS caseworkers—one, for possession of crack cocaine; another, for abusing a pet—have further tarnished that agency's reputation.)

Columnist Richard Cohen is also pessimistic about the benefits of more laws. He wants "a winching of the system so it is taut, closing the cracks through which Nixzmary slipped and was lost forever." It remains to be seen how much more taut an organization with a staff of 7,000 and an annual budget of nearly \$2.2 billion can be winched. More useful would be greater candor about America's growing rejection of marriage and the often painful consequences.

Rejection of marriage—whether by divorce, illegitimacy, or cohabitation—dramatically increases children's exposure not only to abuse and death but to all manner of disorders and pathologies, from poor academic performance to illegal drug use; from teen pregnancy to juvenile delinquency; from psychiatric disorders to poor physical health; from poverty to suicide. And children from broken (or nonexistent) homes are much more likely to reject marriage and its consequences when (and if) they become adults. Each of the perpetrators of abuse in the above stories came from nonfamilies.

When four in ten of America's minor children do not go to sleep at night in a home where the man and woman who brought them into the world are married to each other, it cannot be said that the traditional family is the norm. The total number of unmarried women aged 15 and over is closing in on, and may well pass within the next few years, the number of married women in the same age group. More people are cohabiting outside of marriage than ever before. In 2004, there were close to 5.1 million cohabiting couples, compared with fewer than half a million in 1960. And those are unmarried couples of opposing sexes. There are more than half a mil-

lion homosexual cohabiting couples. In other words, there are more homosexual cohabiting couples in America today than there were heterosexual cohabiting couples half a century ago—a development which is itself indicative of our society's rejection of marriage.

For decades, conservative organizations, including The Rockford Institute, have collected social-science data confirming that lifelong marriage is necessary for civilization. The link, however, between the rejection of marriage and its social consequences is no longer a secret of the right. Sociologists at such liberal organizations as New York's Institute for American Values have amassed a mountain of data. For example, children living in a home with an unrelated adult are 50 times more likely to suffer death from child abuse than are children living with their married parents. Children living with step-parents are 40 times more likely to be killed or sexually abused than children living with Mom and Dad. By other measures of child welfare, children reared in stepfamilies fare no better than those growing up in single-parent homes. Children growing up in cohabiting households, or households torn apart by divorce, face similar risks.

The left's belated discovery of the inestimable value of marriage might be charming were it not for the previous 40 years, during which liberals promoted the practices and policies that helped marriage arrive where it is today: fornication, contraception, homosexuality, abortion, welfare, equal rights, daycare, no-fault divorce, prenuptial agreements, and lab experiments designed to replace human reproduction. Absent a renunciation of these failures, no amount of effort to reform the child-welfare bureaucracy or adjust the penal code will prevent future tragedies. 

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Staying the Course

The Unintended Consequences

by Edward A. Olsen

There are many critics of the flaws in the U.S. approach to the "War on Terror" and the merits of our interventionist war in Iraq. Much of the criticism predictably comes from liberals, but the most important, in challenging the *status quo* within a Republican administration, comes from traditional conservatives and libertarians asking why a reputedly conservative White House and conservative-dominated Congress have pursued Wilsonian liberal internationalist goals—interventionism, preemption, and expanded global commitments. Such criticism has centered on the President's neoconservative advisors, who have played major roles in shaping and implementing these policies. Genuine conservatives disdain the neocons' pseudoconservative attributes, which stem from their liberal Democratic heritage, their acceptance of spendthrift big government, and their interventionist affinity for the legacy of Wilsonianism and Stimsonianism in international affairs. Compounding the irony is the way in which a majority of liberal critics, aligned with the Democratic Party in opposition to the Bush administration's hegemonic policies, treat these criticisms as the result of archconservatism run amok, which aggravates traditional conservatives and libertarians all the more. That frustration motivates their quest to clarify what warrants the label "conservative" in U.S. foreign and defense policies.

These efforts on the part of genuine conservatives have had little impact. While it is true that Americans are finally questioning the wisdom of waging the war in Iraq, most of that debate centers on how to rectify a questionable decision by improving the ways in which the war is being waged and persuading the American public that the tasks can be accomplished satisfactorily and at an acceptable price. The Republican and Democratic Party establishments are trying to convince the public that *their* party is more capable of achieving Wilsonian internationalist goals by staying the interventionist course. While a handful of prominent opponents of the war in both parties advocate rapid disengagement, most of the war's opponents favor a far more gradualist approach. This political debate, with escalating tensions in Congress, has been provoked by the increasing number of opinion polls indicating American discontent over the nature of the Iraq war, the insufficient planning for both the war and its anticipated postwar nation building and democratization, and how the war can be

resolved in a manner that can be labeled "successful." Consequently, the current level of our national dialogue is far from the truly raucous nature of the debate provoked during the latter stages of the Vietnam War.

If the principles behind today's "stay the course" approach had been in place since the early 1970's, the United States would still be fighting the Vietnam War—with staggering numbers of casualties. In practice, of course, the decision to alter our course in Vietnam followed a societal upheaval provoked by the debate over the many costs of that war, its negative salience to the Cold War, and the impact it was having on American willingness to remain engaged as a leader of the free world. In short, U.S. societal resolve to stay the course in Southeast Asia was unraveling because of the catastrophic number of dead draftees; this led many Americans to conclude that the Vietnam War was unnecessary for genuine U.S. national defense.

U.S. foreign and defense policies bore the weight of the so-called Vietnam Syndrome for many years. President George H.W. Bush contended that his interventionist rescue of Kuwait signified the end of the constraints imposed by the Vietnam Syndrome. Given the Clinton administration's various interventionist exploits and the current Bush administration's brand of neocon-inspired hawkish internationalism, a case can be made that many Americans agree that the Vietnam Syndrome has become far less relevant today. This is attributable, in part, to generational change and to Americans' feeble historical consciousness. If the current Iraq war inflicted a number of casualties on par with Vietnam—perhaps necessitating revival of a draft that cut across all social classes—and if popular reactions to those casualties and the pressures put on U.S. society were to become similar to those of the Vietnam era, we might witness the onset of an "Iraq Syndrome." Fortunately, that has not been the case—which is not surprising, in light of the many Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian affairs pundits who have pointed out the major differences in the roots of these two wars, geopolitical variances, and how U.S. war-fighting capabilities have evolved over the intervening years. However, if the situation in Iraq were to drag on and casualties were to mount tremendously, an Iraq Syndrome could yet materialize, unleashing a domestic upheaval within the United States. Cindy Sheehan and her very liberal activist cohorts could form the basis of a mass movement capable of creating an abrupt exit from Iraq reminiscent of Vietnam. For better or worse, this is very unlikely to happen, because enough U.S. officials learned harsh lessons from back then about what to do, and what *not* to do.

Echoes of the United States' profound setback in Vietnam haunt them and intensify their frequently stated resolve not to "cut and run." While this mind-set has inherent systemic log-

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ic, it also commits its adherents to both good policies that are not working out as planned and fatally flawed interventionist policies that are unraveling as critics predicted. This is well illustrated by President Bush's deteriorating opinion-poll ratings and the White House's harsh counterattacks on their Democratic critics for "sabotaging" the war effort. These developments perversely add to the unraveling process.

Despite the similarities between the past Vietnam Syndrome and a potential Iraq Syndrome, it is interesting that the anxieties provoked by those possible linkages may help to set the stage for a constructive catastrophe. The worse things become in Iraq, or elsewhere in the expanding U.S. empire, the more the United States stretches thin her territorial national defense. The preemptive Bush Doctrine, coupled with the effects our "revolution in military affairs" has on American societal values, distracts U.S. national-security policy from its truly *national* focus. As problems arise in Iraq or in other potential foreign entanglements—elsewhere in the Middle East, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa come to mind—the more the nature of the national debate is likely to shift toward a serious reassessment of the utterly unsound structure of U.S. foreign and defense policy.

Several thorough analyses of how and why the United States is going astray from her traditions are already reshaping our national debate. Foremost on the conservative side are Ivan Eland's *The Empire Has No Clothes: U.S. Foreign Policy Exposed* (Independent Institute, 2004) and Andrew Bacevich's *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford University Press, 2005). Together with several volumes from the liberal side—notably, Chalmers Johnson's *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (Metropolitan Books, 2000) and *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (Metropolitan Books, 2004)—these works are focusing the national debate on how neoconservatism is jeopardizing real homeland security by overemphasizing international interventionism. Such interventionism is built on what Johnson characterizes as an "empire of bases" resulting from U.S. efforts to expand the American military footprint overseas and thereby enhance U.S. strategic flexibility in dealing with potential terrorists, and it is fostered by what both Bacevich and Johnson bemoan as growing militarism among U.S. leaders.

Americans are making their homeland increasingly vulnerable by expending too much time, money, and effort on flawed global security while neglecting literal national security. Despite the warnings of such authentic American conservatives as Eland (see also his *Putting "Defense" Back Into U.S. Defense Policy*) calling our attention to vulnerabilities on the home front, and as much as September 11 should have made us acutely aware of the risks posed by Islamic terrorists within our borders, Washington persists in its interventionist Wilsonianism. Were terrorists to carry out any of the major threats within the United States that so many analysts have openly suggested are imminent—using some form of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon of mass destruction or any other form of attack capable of inflicting massive casualties—Americans could experience a societal catastrophe far more devastating than the Vietnam War. In a peculiar way, the American public's anxieties about governmental efficacy in the wake of Hurricane Katrina may have a positive spillover effect by drawing attention to the budgetary priorities of all facets of homeland security, which could

be tested by a future catastrophe.

No one in his right mind would long for such an event. Nonetheless, it must be contemplated because it would generate the caliber of national debate capable of putting the United States on a proper track toward genuine national defense. As things become worse in our "War on Terror," and as more American critics—liberal and conservative—dwell on alternative priorities for authentic national defense, the dire prospect of such a catastrophic event should stimulate Americans to engage in a debate designed to rectify the situation before it gets out of control. In such circumstances, Americans might adapt the antiwar slogan of some on the noninterventionist right and left—namely, "support the troops, bring them home"—in order to underscore what might be labeled the "GWOT Syndrome," taking advantage of that awkward acronym for the Global War on Terrorism, about which even the Bush administration has had occasional second thoughts. If a GWOT Syndrome debate were effectively conducted, it could yield a bipartisan consensus among Americans calling for a reconceived war on terrorists focused entirely on full-fledged homeland self-defense. This would include improved anti-missile defenses and strengthened border and port security. Instead of permitting a catastrophic attack to befall the United States on her home front, Americans should engage now in a debate that would shape an environment conducive to a much sounder approach to genuine national security.

This prospective debate would call attention to the domination of both major U.S. political parties by hawks and would thereby encourage dissenters in both parties to change course and lead the United States toward authentic national defense. Genuine conservatives who rarely read the *Nation* could learn something from Alexander Cockburn's column "[Chuck] Hagel and Ron Paul as the peace ticket in 2008! Who needs Democrats?" (August 29 / September 5, 2005). If the Republican Party returns to authentically conservative noninterventionist policies through this debate, it and the entire country would be vastly improved. Conversely, if things get bad enough on the Republican end of the spectrum, I can foresee a conservative columnist advocating an equivalent team from the Democratic Party, perhaps led by Sen. Russ Feingold, asking "Who needs Republicans?" Or the debate could create an incentive for noninterventionist dissenters in both parties to create a coalition drawing on the Robert Taft and George McGovern traditions. Such a transpartisan coalition could form a successful third party that could dramatically alter our political and governmental course.

Americans should ask themselves three key questions pertaining to the issues surrounding U.S. interventionism. What constitutes genuine *national* security? How many of the countries overseas whom we count as U.S. "allies" do we really need to defend because we actually depend on them to defend U.S. homeland territory from external and internal attacks by terrorists? And do we really want our president and Congress to be responsible for the defense of the entire world or just of the United States of America? If we continue to foster the aforementioned debate, the answers to these questions, which are already apparent to anti-interventionists on the right and the left, will become more and more evident to the entire American populace, who, according to a recent Pew Research Center/Council on Foreign Relations poll, are becoming more disposed to the United States "mind[ing] its own business internationally and let[ting] other countries get along as best they can on their own." <C>

Collision Course

Taiwan, China, and the United States

by Ted Galen Carpenter

While the United States is preoccupied with Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, a far more dangerous crisis is brewing: the prospect of an armed confrontation between Taiwan and mainland China. Unfortunately, Washington's current policy places us in the middle of that quarrel. If U.S. leaders do not change course, America could find herself in a perilous showdown with a nuclear-armed China within a decade.

Beijing insists that Taiwan is merely a renegade province of the People's Republic of China, and, although Chinese officials state that the PRC wants to regain sovereignty over the island by peaceful means, they have consistently refused to renounce the use of force to achieve reunification. Renouncing force is an option that they will not entertain even in off-the-record discussions, even when the concession is presented as part of a *quid pro quo* for the termination of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan—something Beijing wants very much.

It is often difficult for Americans and other Westerners to comprehend the depth of Chinese determination to get Taiwan to "return to the motherland." To many (probably most) Chinese, Taiwan is the most potent remaining symbol of China's long period of weakness and dependence, which began in the early 19th century, and her resulting shabby treatment at the hands of various colonial powers. For these inheritors of an ancient and proud culture, that treatment was profoundly humiliating and opened deep emotional wounds that have yet to heal. It was during the period of weakness that Britain wrested Hong Kong away; Japan seized Taiwan (and later Manchuria); czarist Russia amputated portions of Chinese territory along their border; and France, Germany, and other countries established colonies or enclaves. That is why the emotional symbolism of China's reclamation of Hong Kong in 1997 transcended even that entity's admittedly significant economic importance. The last of the European enclaves, Macao, was restored to Beijing's jurisdiction in 1999. Taiwan is now the principal piece of traditional Chinese territory that has yet to be recovered.

There also are ominous indications that the political elite in China is losing patience on the Taiwan issue. Long gone is the cavalier attitude of PRC leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1970's that the Taiwan issue could remain unresolved for 100 years without unduly upsetting Beijing. As Taiwan has democratized and accelerated her quest for international recognition, Beijing has become noticeably less sanguine. An early indication of growing impatience came in 2000, when the Chinese government issued an 11,000-word White Paper. The key section outlined

"three situations" in which China would use force against Taiwan. The first two reflected previous PRC statements that Beijing would resort to force if either a turn of events led to the separation of Taiwan from the mainland (*i.e.*, a clear move toward formal independence) or a foreign invasion or other measures led to Taiwan's separation. The third situation was unprecedented, however. The White Paper emphasized that the Taiwanese authorities could not expect to stall negotiations for reunification indefinitely. For the first time, Beijing indicated that it might consider such delaying tactics to be sufficient grounds for resorting to military force.

Any remaining doubt on that score disappeared when the National People's Congress (the PRC's rubber-stamp legislature) passed the Anti-Secession Act in March 2005. Much of the language in the statute was uncompromising and hawkish. Article 2 made it clear that "the state will never allow the 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces to make Taiwan secede from China under any name or by any means." And the heart of the act, Article 8, stressed that Beijing was determined to prevail, by whatever means necessary, on the issue of reunification.

In the event that the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities of a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Beijing is backing up this determined language with substantive military measures. For example, the PRC has expanded deployment of missiles on its side of the Taiwan Strait and now has more than 700 missiles arrayed against Taiwan. The PRC's overall military modernization program is accelerating, and it concentrates on developing weapon systems that would make a U.S. air and naval intervention very risky.

It is likely that Beijing has not yet decided to use coercion to achieve reunification, but it is equally apparent that the PRC political elite regards the use of force as a viable option if peaceful alternatives prove ineffective. Any one of several developments could set a coercive strategy in motion: the emergence of a more hard-line PRC government; evidence that pro-independence sentiment on Taiwan is becoming dominant; or simply frustration on the mainland with the prospect of an indefinite stalemate. That danger may increase as communism fades as a unifying force in China and Chinese nationalism replaces it.

Meanwhile, separatist sentiments are growing in Taiwan—especially among younger Taiwanese. To them, China is an alien country. A vibrant, distinct society has evolved in Tai-

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wan, and many Taiwanese note that their island has been ruled by Beijing for only 4 of the last 111 years—and never by communists. Taiwan has developed separately from the mainland, and it is understandable that many Taiwanese want that reality ratified by having an independent state that enjoys full international recognition.

The bulk of the Taiwanese business community favors close ties to the mainland, which helps to counteract the influence of the pro-independence faction. The overall trend, however, seems clear. Numerous public-opinion surveys show that very few Taiwanese are interested in reunification with a communist China. Indeed, a growing number of Taiwanese may not be interested in reunification even if the mainland someday becomes democratic. At the very least, there is a broad consensus in favor of the island's current *de facto* independence, and most Taiwanese want some form of political recognition from the international community. A distinct national identity has emerged in Taiwan—a “Taiwanese consciousness,” as President Chen Shui-bian stressed in his 2006 New Year's address to the nation—leaving little room for Beijing's hope that the Taiwanese people will eventually agree to reunification.

Given the intensity of the emotions on both sides of the strait, it is uncertain how long the *modus vivendi* that has existed since Washington's rapprochement with the PRC in the 1970's can endure. Both Beijing and Taipei seem increasingly dissatisfied with the *status quo* built around Taiwan's acceptance of her place in political and diplomatic limbo. They also have sharply conflicting prescriptions for resolving the impasse. Beijing advocates the formula of “one country, two systems,” which would mean a status for Taiwan similar to that granted Hong Kong—albeit with somewhat greater autonomy. Taipei categorically rejects that solution. During the years of control by the Kuomintang Party (KMT) (from the late 1940's to the mid-90's), Taiwanese leaders at least implicitly accepted the concept of one China. But the formula under KMT President Lee Teng-hui in the late 90's shifted to “one China, two states.” The model Lee and his supporters seemed to be advocating was that of Germany during the latter stages of the Cold War. That option, though, was anathema to the PRC.

When the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won Taiwan's presidency in 2000, sentiment for an independent Taiwan intensified. Under the current president, Chen Shui-bian, even the *pro forma* acceptance of one China has largely been abandoned. According to Chen, one China is merely one possible outcome of negotiations between their two sovereign and equal states. Moreover, a sizable portion of the Democratic Progressive Party's membership is even more radical than Chen. And the DPP's junior partner in the “Pan Green” electoral alliance (the Taiwan Solidarity Union) makes the DPP look anemic on the independence issue. To staunchly pro-independence elements in either the DPP or the TSU, the ultimate goal of negotiations with Beijing is not reunification but formal separation.

The United States has pursued a policy that seeks both to preserve friendly ties with Beijing and to protect Taiwan's *de facto* independence. As developed during the 1980's and 90's, that policy incorporated the doctrine of strategic ambiguity. On the one hand, Washington officially adheres to a one-China policy and does not dispute Beijing's contention that Taiwan is part of China. On the other, the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act mandates that the United States sell defensive arms to Taiwan and regard any PRC effort to coerce Taiwan as a grave breach of the peace.

Whether the United States would intervene with her own military forces in the event of a Chinese attack remains ambiguous. The point of strategic ambiguity is to keep both sides guessing. The rationale is that Taipei would have to wonder whether the United States would really come to Taiwan's rescue if Taiwanese leaders needlessly provoked Beijing by pushing an independence agenda. Conversely, Beijing would have to suspect that the United States would defend Taiwan. Therefore, both sides have an incentive to act cautiously.

It is especially risky when Washington does not (and probably cannot) exercise effective control over the actions of an ally or client.

Strategic ambiguity worked reasonably well until the mid-90's, when a newly democratic Taiwan began to push the independence envelope, and the PRC reacted with ever-more-pointed warnings. Today, there is an increasing likelihood that Taipei and Beijing may interpret U.S. policy exactly the opposite of the way that U.S. officials desire. As the PRC's economic and military power grows, Chinese leaders may conclude that the American commitment to defend Taiwan is a bluff. And the Taiwanese may conclude that the United States would never allow a vibrant fellow democracy to be conquered by an authoritarian aggressor, even if Taiwan's actions were provocative. As Washington has tried to preserve an increasingly fragile *status quo*, it has often created confusion and increased the risk of miscalculation by one or both parties to the Taiwan dispute.

An especially troubling aspect of U.S. policy is that America has little control over events relevant to the Taiwan situation. To some extent, that is a problem inherent in any international trouble spot involving the United States. It is always possible for the opposing party to trigger a crisis. But the Taiwan problem is far more complicated and dangerous. The United States has to worry not only about whether her potential adversary (China) remains prudent but about whether her client state (Taiwan) remains prudent. Indeed, in this case, Washington may have to worry more about Taipei than about Beijing. It is dangerous to undertake any commitment to defend a client or an ally, but it is especially risky when the United States does not (and probably cannot) exercise effective control over the actions of that ally or client. That is precisely the situation today in the relationship between Washington and Taipei.

The United States is at a precarious point with regard to her Taiwan policy. “For the decade ahead, we need to keep the lid on the pressure cooker,” states one high-ranking U.S. official. Washington may find that such a mission is beyond its ability. At the very least, it will be an increasingly frustrating and dangerous mission. Given the trends both in Taiwan and on the mainland, there is a mounting danger of military confrontation sometime in the next decade between the two parties that could entangle the United States. Indeed, unless significant policy changes take place in Taipei, Beijing, or Washington, a collision course is all too likely. 

Target Hit, No Bull's Eye

by Ivan Eland

"War is a perpetual struggle with embarrassments."

—Colmar von der Goltz

The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq
by George Packer
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux;
480 pp., \$26.00

George Packer's *The Assassins' Gate* aptly exposes the incompetence of the Bush administration's occupation of Iraq. The author has traveled to Iraq many times to talk to leading Iraqis, their not-so-prominent fellow citizens, and U.S. policymakers. The book makes for interesting reading partly because Packer uses the experiences of ordinary Iraqis to illustrate the ineptitude of the Bush administration's Iraq policy. Yet it falters in implying that a more competent administration could have been more successful in the Herculean task of restructuring an entire society's political, economic, and social system.

Packer delves below the surface to explore the origin of White House policies that have been roundly criticized. For example, many independent analysts have faulted the Bush administration for its insufficient deployment of ground troops to Iraq and sketchy military planning for the postwar occupation. According to Packer, the government intended to lop off, after the invasion, the top layer only of the Iraqi army and bureaucracy; install

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Melanie Anderson

Iraqi exiles at the highest levels of a new, fully functioning state; significantly draw down U.S. forces within six months; and use Iraqi oil revenues to pay for all of this. Packer claims that rosy predictions of an early military withdrawal, the military's reluctance to engage in nation building, and the administration's suppression of any hint of possible postwar complications that might erode support for the invasion in the first place all contributed to insufficient postwar planning. On the last issue, the White House refused to use the "Desert Crossing" plan created by Gen. Anthony Zinni, a previous head of the Central Command who was skeptical of the invasion, because administration officials considered the plan's assumptions too negative.

Packer alleges that the U.S. military's urge to exit Iraq quickly made it reluctant to impose martial law to stop the

looting in the aftermath of the invasion; unchecked looting emboldened an Iraqi insurgency that was beginning to challenge the U.S. occupation. Although many conservatives have been fairly criticized for supporting the U.S. government's restructuring of societies abroad while opposing government activism at home, more liberal Democrats (including George Packer) have advocated the application of martial law in overseas nation building—a tactic they would resist being imposed on Americans at home.

According to Packer, the plan to remove only the top tier of the Iraqi military and bureaucracy was reversed without much analysis by Paul Bremer, the second American administrator in the Coalition Provisional Authority. Though Packer holds Bremer responsible for many bad decisions, this proved to be a particularly fateful one. Dissolving the Iraqi military and tossing out Ba'athists as far down as the middle levels of government threw away much expertise, while creating enemies capable of making things very difficult for the United States in Iraq. Washington's entire strategy for exiting Iraq now rests on training new security forces to replace those disbanded by Paul Bremer.

Packer notes that Bremer based the Iraqi occupation—the most complex attempt at nation building the United States has undertaken since the reconstruction of Japan and Germany after World War II—on these two policies. The problem is that Iraq, unlike Japan and Germany, was not totally destroyed and exhausted by war, did not have a First World industrial economy, had no expe-

rience with democracy, and, above all, was not a unified and cohesive society. Hence, the Bremer administration's reliance on misguided strategy was, in fact, just another nail in the coffin of Washington's massive social-engineering project.

The Assassins' Gate explores other missteps in the implementation of that endeavor, citing the insistence by Sunni sheikhs that the insurgency was not inevitable. In April 2003, the Anbar province, where the insurgency began, was ready to cooperate with the occupiers, the sheikhs argued. Had the United States held her troops outside of Fallujah and Ramadi, no protests would have occurred, U.S. soldiers would not have fired on the crowds, and a retaliatory insurgency would not have arisen. Though Packer concedes "a bit of truth to this account" (U.S. forces occupying these towns were trained for combat instead of urban peacekeeping and, hence, overreacted to provocation), he cites U.S. military sources as saying that U.S. occupiers received no support from these tribal leaders from the start.

He argues, too, that the Bush administration, despite its eagerness to proclaim "freedom" for the Iraqis, never developed the institutions needed to make political freedom a reality for fear of losing control of Iraq. And Packer implies that Washington failed to pour money as rapidly as was necessary into Iraq's reconstruction. He cites Jerry Silverman, a former official with the Agency for International Development who worked both in wartime Vietnam and in Iraq during the occupation, as saying that, though aid failed to buy political support for the United States in Vietnam, it might have done so in Iraq had security been established sooner. This hypothetical reversal of effect seems a dubious proposition. Moreover, security is what the United States has been trying to buy with aid.

In addition to keeping experts on Iraq and the Middle East at a distance, Bremer held off the Iraqis themselves. According to *The Assassins' Gate*, the Coalition Provisional Authority was kept inaccessible to the Iraqi people for security reasons. Owing to the dangers beyond, many in the U.S. occupation remain inside the fortified Green Zone and make few trips into the rest of Iraq to acquaint themselves with the Iraqi people and their problems. This reduces U.S. casualties, which helps out with public opinion back home but does nothing to win the "hearts and minds" of the local people. And Packer quotes Silverman again as con-

cluding that, unlike U.S. military and civilian personnel who served in Vietnam, those in Iraq are unwilling to accept the casualties needed to secure the cities and highways in order to give reconstruction a chance to succeed: "Our troops are in force-protection mode. They don't protect anyone else."

Force protection as priority number one is nothing new—for example, in Lebanon in the early 1980's; Somalia (1993); the Bosnian peacekeeping mission (1995 and thereafter); and the war in Kosovo (1999). That the United States would commit her Armed Forces to a mission and then worry more about force protection than accomplishment of the mission is the result of the unwillingness of the American public fully to support its elected leaders' wars of choice. Often, the public will give the president the benefit of the doubt by supporting his initial decision to deploy troops overseas. But if the mission is not truly vital to U.S. security and victory is not swift, casualties mount, or the action goes wrong, public support erodes quickly. Contrast this attitude with the public's acceptance of mass casualties in World War II in fighting a conflict that was perceived as vital to the nation's survival. One might think that the American public's justifiable aversion to casualties in wars of choice would make the nation's leaders cautious in committing military forces to conflicts that do not threaten America's vital interests. Nevertheless, once it became apparent that the Ba'athists—knowing that they could not defeat the most powerful military in world history on a conventional battlefield—had planned a guerrilla war in advance, it was only a matter of time before public support for the war eroded.

Although Packer does an excellent job of exposing the Bush administration's failures in Iraq, he avoids the larger question of whether restructuring entire societies at gunpoint is an overly ambitious task for any government to undertake. Although not impressed with John Kerry, Packer essentially endorses the view of the 2004 Kerry campaign that success in Iraq could have been achieved by making the effort more international and bipartisan.

Packer acknowledges that, as early as the summer of 2003, he recognized U.S. policy in Iraq to have failed and that he had entertained his own illusions as to what could be accomplished there. Although he rejects Paul Berman's compar-

ison of Iraq, post-invasion, to postcommunist Prague in 1989, he admits to having had a naive belief in the possibilities for a "political and cultural flowering" in a post-Saddam era. Packer adds, however, that, although the Bush administration emphasized the democratization of Iraq and the Middle East only after all its other justifications for the invasion had evaporated, the argument has to be taken seriously.

That is difficult to do, however, because the administration never seemed to take that rationale seriously. Even George Packer admits that the White House's original strategy was to "install the exiles and get out." Bremer's initial seven-step plan toward Iraqi self-sufficiency hardly seemed very democratic, and neither did the caucus system that replaced it. Only Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was heard to demand a democratic election, which he knew that his candidates would likely win. And American officials called off local elections that they knew would not produce the desired result and closed a Shiite newspaper that helped trigger a massive Shiite rebellion.

Only after the initial plan fell through did the administration decide to create a mirror image of the United States in Mesopotamia—a federal republic complete with a stock market and a public television network that no one watched. Even neoconservative Max Boot, a fervent advocate of military force for the purpose of nation building, admits that the history of such endeavors has been "mixed." (Others would say abysmal.) Any expert would have advised that the political cooperation needed for a U.S.-style federation in Iraq would have been hard to achieve, given the rancorous ethnic and religious factionalism pulling the country in different directions. As noted earlier, Iraq is not post-World War II Japan or Germany, and the Iraqis were not as favorable to U.S. social-engineering plans for their society. A U.N. official, quoted by Packer, succinctly summarizes the view of many Iraqis: "They're under occupation. They're not happy about it."

George Packer is against partition of Iraq. But, with all factions supporting well-armed militias and the U.S. military unwilling to disarm them, Iraq already suffered partition *de facto*. The Kurds and Shiites, both possessing oil wealth, are each already trying to go their own way. Iraq appears destined for formal partition, either by peaceful means or after a bloody civil war. The latter has probably already started. ©

The Way Home

by Bill Kauffman

The Way of Ignorance and Other Essays

by Wendell Berry

Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard;
208 pp., \$24.00

Wendell Berry's latest harvest of essays contains characteristically wise observations on mobility, industrial agriculture, and other maladies of our age, but it also displays a Berry seldom glimpsed—that is, Wendell Berry as a rural Kentucky Democrat reluctant to quit a party that long ago quit rural America. He even titles one short piece “Some Notes for the Kerry Campaign, If Wanted.” (They weren’t.)

Like the men of Port William in his novels, Berry is a yellow-dog Democrat. He refuses to give up on the party “because of its name.” Not a bad reason—probably better than mine, which is a sentimental attachment to the Loco Focos, William Jennings Bryan, and Gov. Al Smith—but Democrats in the age of Hillary Clinton bear the same relationship to democracy that George W. Bush’s empire-loving Republicans have to the republic.

Berry reproves the Democrats for their smug secularism. The “stereotypical ‘liberal’ view of the religious people of the ‘red states’ is that they are provincial and stupid,” he writes, opining that “the Democrats’ failure to appeal to intelligent Christians” is a grave mistake. He offers the best response I have read to the intelligent design *versus* evolution squabble: Let schoolkids read both Darwin and the Old Testament, for “no young mind is going to be seriously warped by exposure either to Genesis or to the theory of evolution.”

The real “failure of the Party,” according to Berry, is the unwillingness of the Democrats to confront “the great moral issue of our time”—“violence,” which comes in many shapes and sizes, from perpetual warfare to strip mining. Wendell Berry is pro-life, which is to say he is opposed to abortion, capital punishment, and war. A Democratic Party of his stamp would counter what he terms a “violent economy” by defending family farms, small-scale and locally owned businesses, and the air and water and ground.

His democracy would be an agrari-

an party with principles drawn from the Twelve Southerners’ 1930 manifesto *I’ll Take My Stand*, although with a more democratic and Jeffersonian coloration. Berry encountered *I’ll Take My Stand* as a sophomore at the University of Kentucky when a composition instructor, after reading a paper in which Berry argued on behalf of a farmer whose land was to be condemned for an airport or a highway, called his argument “agrarian” and steered him to the greatest hit of Nashville’s band of fugitives. “It is a valuable book, in some ways a wonder,” he marvels, “and I have returned to it many times since.” (What breathing Democratic politician might understand, let alone be moved by, *I’ll Take My Stand*? Jerry Brown? Fred Harris? Jim Hightower? Misfits, renegades—men not invited to the party.)

Yet UK, where Berry later taught for many years, did not nurture his “native agrarianism. It seems to me now that my agrarian upbringing and my deepest loyalties were obscured by my formal education.” A book alone does not an agrarian make. The more significant act was Berry’s 1964 reclamation of the Kentucky River farm “about a mile from the house where my mother was born and raised and about five miles from my father’s home place.” *You’ve got to stand on what you stand for*, as Berry’s friend, the late desert anarchist Edward Abbey, liked to say. In taking up the plow, “I knew that I was not a literary agrarian merely but also a practical one.”

In Berry’s 1970 essay “The Regional Motive,” he wrote, with the candor of youth, that “the withdrawal of the most gifted of [the Southern Agrarians] into . . . Northern colleges and universities invalidated their thinking, and reduced their effort to the level of an academic exercise.” He now calls that remark “a piece of smartassery,” but his regret is mitigated, one suspects, by the knowledge that sometimes smartasses are right. And Berry was right. He was gently scolded by Allen Tate and added an apologetic footnote when the essay was reprinted, but, in thinking on it three decades later, he concludes that “the major fault of *I’ll Take My Stand*” is that it is “abstract, too purely mental.”

An “absentee regionalism” of the sort practiced by many of the Southern Agrarians ignores “the difficulty and the discipline of locality.” It’s hard to be an ideologue when you’re topping onions. An anchorless academic agrarianism ignores

“the distinct individuality of every farm,” argues Berry. In daily farming, “one is abruptly and forcibly removed from easy access to the abstractions of regionalism, politics, economics, and the academic life. To farm is to be placed absolutely.” One “must shed the clichés that constitute ‘The South’ or ‘My Old Kentucky Home’ and come to the ground.”

For all of Berry’s agrarianism, he also sounds populist themes, never more so than in proposing a pair of constitutional amendments that come right out of the Midwestern populist playbook, circa 1917: First,

that when war breaks out the president and all consenting members of his administration as well as all consenting legislators, whatever their ages, should immediately be enrolled as privates in combat units; and 2) that for the duration of any war all executives and shareholders of corporations contributing to the war effort should be restricted to the same annual income as the workers in their factories—no sacrifice being too great in a time of national peril.

Once upon a time, Democrats such as Sen. Thomas P. Gore and Bryan, the Great Commoner, proposed much the same thing. Somehow, it fell through the cracks of John Kerry’s platform.

Berry is not a self-consciously aphoristic writer, but each essay contains its gems. Among my favorites: “a house for sale is not a home.” And in the happily titled “Compromise, Hell!” he notes that Americans have become “a submissive people,” for

Most of us are still too sane to piss in our own cistern, but we allow others to do so, and we reward them for it. We reward them so well, in fact, that those who piss in our cistern are wealthier than the rest of us.

We also hear from Berry the optimist. Though we are living amidst what he has called punishments and ruins, he is pleased by “a growing interest here in farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and other means of direct marketing to local customers, in diversified, sustainable agriculture.” Relocalizing the economy “will require a long time and a lot of work, but we have begun.”

There are stirrings of a "movement of redemption" to save families, small farms, historic buildings, wilderness, plants and animals, the sky, darkness, silence. Berry keeps his optimism from running over: He concedes that the redemptive side in the national debate "is hardly a side at all. It doesn't have a significant political presence. It is virtually unrepresented in our state and federal governments." But it is out here.

In a superb speech to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Berry rues the "ain't-it-awful conversations" we all have. "Mere opposition finally blinds us to the good of things we are trying to save," he says, and keeps us from "the sense of shared humanity" with our opponents, "who no doubt are caricaturing us while we are demonizing them." Simply being against things is not good enough; in fact, it is not good at all.

You have to be for something. Nothing seeded in hate can bear fruit. Wendell Berry's party, it turns out, is not the Democrats. It is the party of home—the party of love.

Bill Kauffman's Look Homeward,
America is due in May from ISI Books.

Blue State Mencken

by Joseph Scotchie

Mencken: The American Iconoclast
by Marion Elizabeth Rogers
New York: Oxford University Press;
662 pp., \$35.00

◆
In 1989, a volume of H.L. Mencken's journals was published. The contents revealed, among many other things, impolite utterances by the Sage of Baltimore about blacks and Jews. (Mencken also sailed into the ways of "lintheads" and "mountaineers," but that bothered no one.) The denunciations came fast and furious. As I recall, one journalist refused to accept an award in Mencken's name. Almost overnight, the once-iconic H.L. Mencken had become the latest victim of political correctness. That was 17 years ago. For some, the statute of limitations has run out.

This thick biography is not for *Chronicles* readers. Instead, its goal, at least as I see it, is to reclaim Mencken for the left.

"H.L. Mencken, the legendary scourge of the booboisie, infuriated red-state Americans while enchanting urban freethinkers, boozers, and long-haired eggheads," enthuses Russell Baker in a back-cover blurb. That says it all. Yesterday's booboisie is today's red stater. And so, meet the H.L. Mencken for the 21st century: a blue-state prophet.

The story of any writer who starts out with ambition and manages to succeed can never grow old, and this biography is no exception. Growing up in pre-television America, the teenage Mencken "read like a machine." His lifelong writing habits weren't any different. Evenings were often spent researching and writing book projects on subjects that usually had little to do with his newspaper work. Much of Mencken's early reading was conventional, but the writer who impressed him most was Thomas Henry Huxley, who, according to Rogers, converted Mencken into a "violent agnostic." In the early 20th century, social Darwinism was all the rage among intellectuals, and the young Mencken signed up for the cause. Such thinking also caused him to champion the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, of whom he penned a biography in 1907. This worldview would lead to repeated conflicts with the lingering Christendom of the Western world.

Mencken loved newspaper work, and he rose quickly through the ranks of Baltimore journalism. He had a gift for language as it was spoken on the streets, a fascination that inspired him to celebrate the American version of English as something vital and colorful. Mencken was a born pundit who also burned to write serious literary and theater criticism, all with the goal of shaping American culture, which he achieved most spectacularly with his editorship of the highly popular *American Mercury*.

All that energy paid off, causing Mencken's fame to soar well beyond Baltimore. The 1920's were his heyday. As with Babe Ruth, another larger-than-life German-American, Mencken swaggered his way through the Jazz Age, staring down would-be censors in dour Boston and riding high as a national celebrity. How many journalists could travel to Hollywood and be treated with the same admiration as a leading man? Mencken's career was not defined by the 1926 Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, but that event did dramatize his beliefs: science *versus* Christianity; big-city agnosticism against small-town religion. In fact,

a paranoid Mencken now felt his task was to defend the "beleaguered city" from the "barbaric yokels" in Middle America.

Long before Dayton, Mencken had disliked William Jennings Bryan, the vanquished presidential candidate who defended Tennessee's anti-evolution laws. The Scopes trial gave him a chance to finish off Bryan for good. In fact, it was Mencken who suggested that Clarence Darrow put Bryan on the witness stand. It worked: Although he lost the case, Darrow made Bryan look foolish by questioning his literalist reading of the Bible. Moreover, the pressure of the case caught up with Bryan. Incredibly enough, he died only days after a worthless guilty verdict was handed down to John Scopes. "We killed the son of a bitch!" Mencken gloated after hearing of Bryan's death. It was not exactly his finest hour.

Indeed, the bell would toll for Mencken himself. The 1930's were a tough decade for him. The Depression forced him to resign from the *American Mercury*, which soon became a mere shell of its former self. A 1930 book, *Treatise on the Gods*, caused a controversy for its brief but critical remarks about Jewish behavior. (Mencken protested by claiming that he didn't like "religious Catholics and Protestants," either.) Most importantly, the libertarian Mencken ran into the New Deal, whose big-spending ways he abhorred. But Mencken more than met his match in FDR. Americans wanted government action to alleviate their economic suffering, and Roosevelt's charisma had easily won over the public. Roosevelt was aware of Mencken's published criticisms. At a 1934 Gridiron Club gathering, FDR used a Mencken quotation—one that playfully ridiculed the journalistic profession—to humiliate his nemesis. In 1936 and 1940, Mencken traveled the country with FDR's GOP challengers, Alf Landon and Wendell Wilkie, but that was a nonstarter. FDR's 1940 reelection to an unprecedented third term marked the end of Mencken's career as an active pundit. It was not only the triumph of the New Deal that laid Mencken low; there was also the impending war with Germany. Mencken came from distinguished German stock. Like many German-Americans, he had felt humiliated by the anti-German propaganda that raged throughout the country during World War I. Covering the next war might, in fact, have been painful for him. Mencken had great difficulty in criticizing Hitler during the 1930's and,

afterward, coming to terms with the reality of the holocaust. Most importantly, with the start of World War II, there was no longer any place for an iconoclast on the American scene. After Pearl Harbor, the nation marched in lockstep. Most Americans accepted some form of government censorship.

In 1948, Mencken suffered a stroke, the first of several illnesses that led to his death in 1956. In the 1940's and 50's, Mencken published his memoirs, plus collections of essays. He remained on the best-seller lists. He even became a "national institution," but he was no longer someone at the center of American culture and of political battles. Mencken's decline was not without its poignant moments. He was coaxed into covering the 1948 political conventions. At those gatherings, Mencken was idolized by the rising generation of reporters. His dispatches were as irreverent as always, but a new monster had arrived on the scene. The elderly Mencken found himself tripping over the television cables strung across the convention floors. The age of print journalism and, with it, Mencken's America was coming to a close.

Despite the book's leftward tilt, Marion Rogers strives for objectivity in summing up Mencken's efforts as an author and editor. For instance, at Dayton, Mencken did not seek out those thoughtful proponents of creationism who lived in the area. Instead, he wanted only to skewer the locals. On the literary side, Mencken the aesthete published and promoted such giants as Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Thomas Mann. Because of his boorish dislike of white Southerners, however, he nearly missed out entirely on the Southern literary renaissance of the 1920's and 30's. Here, Mencken was saved—to a certain extent, anyway—by his wife, Sara, a writer and a native of Montgomery, Alabama, who helped her husband to see the value in such novelists as William Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe.

A "German Valentino" for much of his adult life, Mencken proved a devoted husband when he married at last, at age 55. Although he suffered greatly from the loss of Sara, who died only five years into the marriage, Mencken, in both his personal and his professional life, was a lucky man. He came of age when newspapers ruled the media, when it was possible for an ambitious young man to land a reporter's job at a big-city daily despite his lack of a college degree and his identity as a white European-American male.

And he wrote in the pre-Pearl Harbor age, when a man could still speak his mind without fear of being fired from his job or being ostracized in his profession. For Mencken, the old America still lived in those boisterous early years of the 20th century. By the 1940's, he was mourning the passing of a lost world. "[This] once great and happy republic," he observed during the ravages of World War II, "[is now] a dismal burlesque of its former self."

Joseph Scotchie is a regular contributor to various conservative publications.

The Great Getaway

by Clyde Wilson

White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism

by Kevin M. Kruse

Princeton: Princeton University Press;
325 pp., \$35.00



A friend who sells high-end real estate tells the story of a well-heeled Northern couple who were enchanted by the idea of owning an antebellum Southern mansion. He met them at the airport and took them to one of our charming old South Carolina towns—one that, having failed to be liberated by the U.S. Army in 1864-65, contained several attractive properties. Scarcely had they arrived, however, when the two demanded to be taken back to the airport. It was evident that the sight of large numbers of black Carolinians in the streets, going about their work and leisure, had led to rapid disenchantment on the part of our prospective citizens.

This is not exactly what Kevin Kruse means by white flight. He has in mind those evil Southerners who have fled Atlanta in recent decades rather than stand and fulfill what he considers their moral duty: Stay behind in pursuit of Kruse's commonplace yet fantastical daydream of egalitarian paradise. High taxes, crime, corruption, and nonfunctional schools seem to the author a small price for others to pay for the realization of his desideratum. Yet most people will sympathize with those in flight, even if they have created the endless nightmare of suburban congestion that is a damned nuisance for

anyone trying to get past Atlanta to some civilized place like Forsyth or Macon. Of course, when Southerners do something bad, they are simply confirming their evil, America-contaminating nature, which is a well-known fact of the universe. Never mind that Georgians in white flight were only doing what Northerners had been doing for 50 years or more with less provocation. (The minority metropolitan-area population for larger Northern cities is 10 percent, compared with Atlanta's 35.)

White Flight does present some interesting history of Atlanta politics during the Civil Rights Era and since—the rocky path ascending from Southern benightedness to the glowing virtue of true American urbanism. Of course, what really happened was the takeover of the city by an unholy collusion of unscrupulous "leaders" of the black community with unscrupulous rent-seeking businessmen speculating in public subsidy. Come to think of it, Atlanta has become a true American city after all—though not, of course, the American city as fantasized in the daydreams of egalitarian utopia.

This is a book written for liberal daydreamers to tell them what they ought to think about Atlanta. These people, it seems, mistakenly honor Atlanta as a model for the success of "civil rights" and black enfranchisement. Liberal right-thinkers should be warned that there is another side to the story. The real lesson lies not in the much-celebrated defeat of segregation but in the massive flight of middle-class whites to the suburbs. Actually, this is news to no one except a daydreaming liberal. White flight has simply become the established, though unofficial, American way. The purpose of presenting this non-news as a fresh discovery is to give liberals a comforting explanation for the electoral strength of "conservative" Republicanism. It is obviously a product of the suburbanization that is a direct result of the "racism" that caused middle-class whites to flee, rather than remain behind in the city to create the reign of loving brotherhood that would certainly have ensued but for their cruel abandonment of the unfortunate. Instead of realizing the author's utopia, they cut and ran. Worst of all, perhaps, they became Republican voters.

Kruse's scenario is plausible only to those who believe that it is somehow a triumph of "conservatism" for Southern voters to have been co-opted into support of the national Republicans' strange brew of state capitalism, imperialism, Christian

Zionism, and police-state tendencies. But that is another story for another day.

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God, Country, Notre Dame

by Tom Piatak

Touchdown Jesus: Faith and Fandom at Notre Dame

by Scott Eden

New York: Simon & Schuster;
368 pp., \$25.00

It must surely embarrass John Miller and the other Francophobic neocons to realize that one of the quintessential American institutions was founded by an intrepid French missionary, who offered this vision for his action: "I have raised Our Lady aloft so that men will know, without asking, why we have succeeded here." And it is a reflection of Father Sorin's adopted country that the University of Notre Dame du Lac first achieved great success in the eyes of Americans by its excellence in a game invented in America, under a metonymic nickname honoring America's most representative Catholic immigrant group but embracing all of them.

The story of how Notre Dame first achieved that excellence under Knute Rockne was told well by Murray Sperber in his early 1990's *Shake Down the Thunder: The Creation of Notre Dame Football*. And the story of how Notre Dame has retained an unparalleled national following among American college football fans, despite not winning a national championship since 1988 and being mired in football mediocrity for a decade, is well told by Scott Eden in *Touchdown Jesus: Faith and Fandom at Notre Dame*.

Eden's book is organized around the 2004 season, which ended with Notre Dame firing its first black head football coach, Ty Willingham—a move that generated great controversy in the sports pages but little among Notre Dame fans. But Eden consistently returns to his themes of faith and fandom at Notre Dame in a way that is even more embarrassing to the neoconservatives than the French

origin of the school. In an age when we are asked to believe that there is nothing more to being an American than arid intellectual assent to a clause from the Declaration of Independence, Eden's story is a reminder that what actually moves Americans are feelings far more elemental than abstract political ideology and adherence to propositions far older than those set forth by Thomas Jefferson.

What sets Notre Dame apart from other college-football programs are its "subway alumni"—fans in every area of the country who follow Notre Dame football despite having no formal connection to the school. (The term was coined to describe the fans, often from the poorer sections of New York City, who poured out of the subways to root for the Fighting Irish in the epochal games against Army from 1923 to 1946, played first at Ebbets Field, then at the Polo Grounds, and finally at Yankee Stadium.) As Eden writes,

The reasons why these prototypical subway alumni made their short pilgrimages were easy enough to discern: they felt a deep affinity for this team made up of Catholic schlumps just like them—Irish and Polish and Italian mostly.

Eden notes that "their passion for all things Notre Dame grew almost nationalistic in its fervor" and that "[t]heir Notre Dame fanaticism was bound up with notions of religion and ethnicity and class." Such feelings existed across America: "Whenever Catholic immigrants settled . . . they also gave rise to subway alumni." As Eden chronicles, the passions awakened in the Rockne era are alive today, oftentimes passed down from grandfather to father to son.

When these passions first arose, however, they were far less controversial than they are today, when public expressions of religious sentiment are frowned upon and the notion of ethnic pride for whites is seen as toxic. Fr. John O'Hara, who was president of the school in the period following Rockne (and later Cardinal O'Hara of Philadelphia), called the school's football team "an apostolate for the working of incalculable good" and believed the team's success on Saturday was related to the number of daily communicants at the school the week before. O'Hara's successor during Willingham's time as coach, Fr. Edward Malloy, by contrast, seemed embarrassed by football;

the connection between the game, religion, and ethnic identity; and everything else that set Notre Dame apart from what one of his flunkies termed the school's "aspirational peers": such thoroughly secular places as Stanford (whence Willingham came), whose sports teams generate little passion and none of whose (comparatively few) fans follow their teams because they see in them a reflection of who they are or of what, at the deepest level, they believe.

Notre Dame's continuing mediocrity under Willingham was certainly a trial for the school's loyal fans. A black Methodist from North Carolina with no obvious affinity for Notre Dame and its football tradition, Willingham was hired after Notre Dame was lobbied by Jesse Jackson; Eden quotes one fan (a poster at the aptly named ND Nation website) as writing, "Ty is out of place here. Wrong guy for this program and its history . . . Other than PC, he has nothing going for him as regards the world of ND football." This fan undoubtedly spoke for many, and it would be wrong to describe such sentiments as "racist," the word bandied by sportswriters after Willingham was fired. Notre Dame fans had long accepted players and even coaches who were not Catholic (including Rockne, who did not convert until 1925, under O'Hara's tutelage), and, by 2004, the majority of the school's players were black, as was the case with almost all schools in the NCAA's Division I-A, while Notre Dame does a markedly better job of graduating its black athletes than do its competitors in football.

It should not be seen as scandalous that at least some (and probably many) Notre Dame fans felt an emotional distance from Willingham, any more than one would be shocked if Grambling fans were put off by a decision to make an Irish Catholic from the Northeast their coach. Coaches are not ordinary job seekers, and they have, in addition to their coaching duties, an important symbolic role. Such distancing as Willingham experienced thus represents not hostility toward other groups but a natural affinity for one's own, an affinity that is not invidious but healthy. A man who does not love himself will produce nothing of value, and neither will a people lacking in normal feelings of self-regard. Certainly, Notre Dame could never have acquired its large following had American Catholics disdained their heritage. To be successful at Notre Dame, a coach must combine "a reverence for Notre Dame as deep

and loyal as any subway alumnus's and a whole lot of winning." Willingham failed on both counts.

Apart from insisting that Willingham's dismissal was not racist, Eden largely avoids addressing the tension between Notre Dame's fan base and a coach who embodied none of the attributes that attracted that base. He does, however, argue persuasively that striving for excellence in all things, including football, is a reflection of the charisma of the Holy Cross order that founded Notre Dame and that "Football . . . had got all bound up at Notre Dame with Catholic identity. Losing the first was a symptom inherent in moving away from the second." And Eden at least suggests that the selection of Fr. John Jenkins to replace Malloy not only made possible the replacement of Ty Willingham with Charlie Weis but might lead to a reaffirmation of Notre Dame's Catholic identity.

The ethno-religious nature of much of the support for Notre Dame is not unique in American sports. As Steve Sailer has noted, "NASCAR has become a covert ethnic-pride celebration for red-state whites of Northern European descent." Such subsidiary allegiances actually help to create, rather than weaken, an authentic American identity. Even those who follow neither sport sense that they are important American institutions, while, for their fans, both Notre Dame football and NASCAR help symbolize what they love about America and serve to focus deep, powerful, and elemental identities on the broader backdrop of American patriotism.

Indeed, there is a reason that the prisoners in *Stalag 17* (and other films like it) were more concerned with whether a new prisoner knew who played in the World Series than what Jefferson wrote in Philadelphia. Eden recounts a telling anecdote about *New York Post* editor James Wechsler, who was scornfully told at a dinner party in 1974, after expressing an interest in the outcome of the Notre Dame-Alabama game, "It's the most American thing you can do." A love for and immersion in the art, culture, and folkways created by Americans (including the great spectator sports invented by Americans) is a surer indicator of being an American than a professed desire to join the "proposition nation." What it means to be an American is tied up with Notre Dame football (and numerous comparable institutions), and Eden is certainly correct when he writes

that "Notre Dame and its football mean more to great numbers of people . . . than a sport involving boys and a field and a score at the end of the day."

Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.

A Falling Market

by Michael Stenton

**Sandstorm: Policy Failure
in the Middle East**

by Leon Hadar
New York: Palgrave Macmillan;
203 pp., \$24.95



Leon Hadar has written a short, dispassionate, and gently theoretical sort of book on American policy in the Middle East. It is not, chiefly, about military operations, terrorists, prisons, and headlines but about policy at the "geopolitical" and "geo-economic level" and about predictions. Though dry, *Sandstorm* is accessible to the general reader.

Hadar believes that the United States has long been tempted to bite off more than she can chew in the Middle East. She has acted in the context of a "Middle Eastern Paradigm"—now out of date—that bundles together solid support for Israel, the cultivation of a club of oil-rich client states, and instinctive opposition to the influence of any other great power in the region. Hadar finds this, to some extent, forgivable. The Soviets used to be a real problem, and the Europeans did not want to pay to protect the oil. But the Gulf War (1991) set up an American dominance in the region and over its huge oil reserves that exceeded anything conceived of previously. It was—for technical, not moral, reasons—a step too far. But the United States got away with taking it at the time, thanks to a *bravura* performance by the competent realists in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. The aftermath, however, exposed the United States not just to Arab resentment and suspicion but to the envy and suspicion of *all* the other powers.

Hadar is a realist who does not believe that balance-of-power mechanisms have ceased to operate in the world merely because the United States has the best weapons. He points out that Washington is skating on very thin economic ice and ar-

gues that it has provoked a covert alliance against its apparently unilateral control of the oil of the Middle East. He explains that oil is not just a matter of company profits: It is regional power, global leverage over powerful states, and the lifeblood of the dollar's global survival as the dominant reserve currency. Like the pound sterling after 1919—when Britain asserted an almost unqualified command of the Middle East—the dollar is overused for reasons of commercial inertia and is likely to be overvalued on account of being propped up by its "petro-dollar" status. This enables the United States to behave as though she were still the unrivaled industrial giant she was in 1945, which she is not.

Hadar is not a moralist. He thinks that public-opinion debates about whether deposing tyrants and holding elections and fighting terrorism are "justified" are largely beside the point. The crucial question is whether other powers feel that their interests are secured or damaged by these enterprises. Hadar claims that the tension between American interests in the Middle East and everyone else's, which was already serious before 2001, became acute and critical with the neo-conservative seizure of power and initiative after September 11.

The official justifications for the liberation of Kuwait, the attack on the Taliban, and the deposition of Saddam Hussein are, in varying degrees, convincing or not; yet, whether good or bad, sincere or dishonest, the actions they supported were imprudent or worse to the extent that they did not include and defer to the interests and aspirations of a world whose economic power and military potential exceeds that of the United States. The American indulgence of unconcealed Israeli ambitions on the Palestinian West Bank has been wholly unlicensed by the international community. It is, for that reason alone, perilous for Israel. On this account, the failure to resolve the Israel-Palestine problem goes beyond its surface expression (Zionist ambition *versus* Arab rejectionism); it is the consequence of the refusal of the international community to support U.S. policy in the Middle East, a refusal that has intensified since it first took shape in the 1970's.

Hadar is a thoughtful Israeli, worried that his country will be stranded by an American policy that is troublesome and likely to fail in the long term. He cannot see beneficial results occurring from the occupation of Iraq. Hadar likes to assess

things nonideologically. The neoconservatives, he thinks, are better understood as overexcited Americans than as agents of Israeli influence, Americanists rather than Zionists. Yet the loyalty of the neocons is more to a conceptual Americanism than to the actual one; a long-term symbiosis of policy and mentality between a macrocosmic Americanism and a microcosmic Zionism has existed for many years.

America has long possessed, without really needing it, unique access to the oil of Saudi Arabia. She has long insulated Israel from international opinion and pressure. Now she disposes—for the moment—of Iraq and Afghanistan, and threatens Syria and Iran. Washington has, in Hadar's expression, "tilted the kaleidoscope"—demolished the *status quo*—in the Middle East in the rash hope of getting something better, naively confident that military power can always prevent something worse. Hadar's list of well-touted moments of opportunity in the Middle East since 1967 is chilling: All of them have been rapidly followed by disillusionment, and often by something worse.

There is a very broad geopolitical point being made here. If the United States (or some other outside power) is unable to tolerate a Middle Eastern successor to the Ottoman Empire, she will need to be willing to tolerate chronic instability and not indulge in fantasies of reform. This is not an odious racial charge that Arab societies cannot be reformed. It is a plausible, almost scientific, judgment that the Middle East will remain highly unstable, and therefore beyond amendment, until an indigenous regional power—or perhaps an indigenous alliance—arises that will be strong enough to create stability, to defend local interests against external powers, and to make deals with important economic partners, chiefly the European Union and neighboring powers, such as India, China, and Russia. American dominance in the Middle East is an artificial military imposition, a house of cards.

Most Arabs and Persians feel this, not just the late Ayatollah Khomeini and the still-extant Osama bin Laden. Al Jazeera television is popular because it reports news on the basis of this understanding. The certainty that America stifles Arab power explains the sequence of noisy anti-American politicians: Nasser, Qaddafi, Arafat, Saddam Hussein, Bin Laden. (The list illustrates Hadar's case against regime change in the Middle East: You can always get something worse in the long

run.) Of course, most critics of the United States would not wish Washington to cede the Middle East to Wahabist admirers of Al Qaeda. Yet, all the European powers still hope that Tehran, a legitimate regime by regional standards, could be part of the solution rather than the latest version of the problem and the next excuse for "tilting the kaleidoscope." What Hadar is saying diplomatically is that Washington is really the problem and needs to be rescued from its present predicament by a scaling back of its ambitions.

Put less politely, international respect for American good sense has collapsed. Washington no longer leads the West. It may be impossible to restore that leadership, however hard the British try, however flexible the next U.S. administration. The intemperate neocon abuse of "Old Europe" will not be forgotten: It is, as Hadar explains, woven into the fabric of American policy and now colors the lenses through which that policy is viewed not just by Berlin and Paris but by London and Madrid. Any opposition to the United States can now rely on a trained reflex in the European public mind. President Bush has achieved an iconic unpopularity unique in the history of European-American relations.

Hadar is not an optimist, but he knows roughly what he wants. He wants an Israel-Palestine deal brokered and imposed by the true international community. He wants a European Union that includes Turkey and is willing to expand further to embrace Israel-Palestine. He wants a post-Zionist Israel that leads in the region only by force of example. The only way of getting these things is through a diminution of uncritical support for Israel and the introduction of the European Union and other major purchasers of Middle Eastern oil into the community of powers that shape a Middle Eastern settlement.

Hadar wants all this, not because he dislikes America—quite the contrary—but because he calculates that America cannot and will not force Israel to evacuate the West Bank and cannot secure the international support that alone can force the Arabs to settle. He might have added that America's considerable potential for cultural-political influence, currently blocked by American policy, would be unlocked by an American withdrawal from Iraq and the end of American hostility to all non-American initiatives. The highest hope is that American influence, given wings by September 11, might penetrate Islamic ideology and produce a

chastened rejection of radical Islam. It is this most necessary project that has been betrayed by the obsession with Iraq and imposed democracy.

Leon Hadar does not offer a mechanism for triggering policy changes in Washington. But recent events—the difficulties in Iraq, the experience of friendlessness (outside the "Anglosphere"), and the Chinese oil contracts with Iran—seem to be having a sobering effect on Washington. It could have been different had the Clinton administration worked on the Israel-Palestine impasse from the first and had the Bush administration looked for a new agenda after September 11, instead of pushing to extend the existing form of American supremacy. Flying solo has narrowed the choice of goals in the contest with religious terrorism: It has meant a frustrating dependence on Pakistan, when the disarmament of a nuclear Pakistan could have been the prize; it has meant mere muttering about Saudi Arabia instead of a hugely influential condemnation of the form of Islam preached there; it has licensed a confrontation with a merely convenient "Axis of Evil," when the relevant locations of Islamic plotting were known to be elsewhere.

Regime change in Baghdad has failed to make the oil flow. Powers with very simple interests can see the American presence in Iraq as harmful. In 2002, Washington looked forward to tearing up Saddam's oil contracts with France and Russia. These countries, and no doubt others, are now presumably discussing with equal relish how to tear up Haliburton's contracts. If Hadar is right, the United States is losing control of her options and even her actions, and her predicament could become much worse.

Withdrawal from an ideologized project is difficult, but new initiatives can crowd out old policy. Attention can be returned to Al Qaeda so as to foster a public examination of its roots in specific places and specific Islamic traditions; Iraq must soon fend for herself; and the right terms for the next initiative on Israel should be checked with Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, Delhi, and Tokyo. This would generate a lot of helpful excitement. The United States can still sell her fantasies of "unipolarity" for a good price. But it is a falling market.

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The End of Childhood

If you want to see how America's liberal elites would like to reshape the United States, look at Western Europe. For decades, they have dreamed of importing European social models, of a Swedish welfare society, and of comprehensive sexual tolerance *à la Hollandaise*. But the liberal vision is most perfectly manifested in the form of children's rights activism, of using threats to children's welfare as a means of gaining widespread public acceptance of highly interventionist social policies. Who, after all, is prepared to speak out against policies to suppress baby battering or child molestation? Look at Europe today, and you are probably seeing the shape of the Democratic Party platform in 2008 or 2012.

In Britain, children's rights have been used to justify a wholesale revision of social policy and concepts of rights and family. There is now a children's minister and a "children's czar," a children's commissioner who regularly makes pronouncements on how the rights of the young are systematically denied.

But the most ambitious consequence to date of the children's rights mind-set is a massive computer database of Orwellian proportions. The rationale for such a system is simple. Every few years, a case emerges in which a child is killed by abusive parents or minders. In the ensuing public inquiry, officials and media compete in their absolute assertions that such an atrocity must never occur again, regardless of social cost. And at such times, political leaders state quite frankly that concepts of family must never be permitted to stand in the way of defending children—in fact, they almost chuckle when considering such an *outré* suggestion.

Hence the database, which will shortly include extensive information on all 11 million children in England. This will provide a comprehensive resource for doctors, police, social workers, and other officials, who will record concerns about possible sexual or physical abuse. Once a file is flagged, other officials can track the endangered child as he moves between jurisdictions, avoiding the kind of inter-agency snafu that generally explains the cases in which deaths have resulted. And to avoid misuse—what if pedophiles ac-

cessed it to track victims?—the database will only be available to those who have cleared criminal background checks.

No democratic government could conceivably propose such a master database of adult citizens, and all that permits the British Little Brother system (my term for it) is that it claims to defend children, and no one is prepared to criticize that. No word yet on what happens to all those records when little Timmy reaches years of discretion, but, almost certainly, no future regime is simply going to trash such a precious archive of personal information. All too probably, they will justify keeping the records active by claiming a need to detect and apprehend future pedophiles.

Somewhere in the past 30 years or so, a majority of the British public came to accept as axiomatic the revolutionary doctrine that the protection of children was far too important to be left to families and required the full intervention of state power, executed by skilled professionals. Now, even if the idea were correct, it is still repulsive and should demand an extensive social debate before implementation. But is it even vaguely correct? At the time when Little Brother was being debated in 2005—when the children's charities were attacking the system for not going far enough—what exactly were the doctors, police, and social workers doing, all those credentialed experts who had successfully passed the relevant background checks?

Why, they were off hunting witches. Now, stories of Satanism and ritual abuse have circulated for years within the social-work and child-welfare community, and every single case has collapsed upon investigation—generally after some group or family has suffered years of official persecution and vilification. But at least by the mid-1990's or so, we knew better—or so we thought. As recently as 2003, though, police investigating a routine sexual-abuse case suddenly heard a torrent of stories from the mother of one victim, who began spinning weird and wonderful tales of robes, demons, and sacrifices. The woman in question had a lengthy psychiatric record, and her own family immediately warned police about her well-established penchant for spinning fantastic tales. So, of course, what could police and social



workers do but believe every word she uttered and begin a nationwide investigation that culminated in numerous arrests, including in that notorious hotbed of licentious depravity, the Hebridean island of Lewis. To quote the *British Observer*,

Eight people, including a 75-year-old grandmother, were accused of raping and sexually abusing children in black magic rituals, of wife-swapping orgies in which they dressed in robes and masks, and of sacrificing cats and chickens and drinking their blood.

Naturally enough, the cases collapsed, but not until many lives had been ruined. If Little Brother had been operational, presumably the files of the children involved would have been labeled appropriately: HERETIC; INCUBUS; POSSESSED.

The worst part of the whole affair was the lack of any real apology, any sense that the fundamental problem lay in child-protection ideology itself and the subversion of the most basic concepts of family and of individual rights. In the Lewis cases, even the accused themselves began their statements by asserting that no measures were too stringent to defend children, and it was just a shame that they had been falsely accused.

In 1953, in one of the all-time classic novels of science fiction, Arthur C. Clarke wrote the following words:

Fifty years is ample time in which to change a world and its people almost beyond recognition. All that is required for the task are a sound knowledge of social engineering, a clear sight of the intended goal—and power.

The title of the book? *Childhood's End*. ◀

by Scott P. Richert

Truth and Consequences

Next month will mark the fourth anniversary of the adoption, by the U.S. Catholic bishops, of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The protocol document was the bishops' response to allegations of long-standing clerical sexual abuse of minors over the past 50 years. While the media, victims' advocates, and not a few of the faithful in the pews (both liberal and conservative) have tended to paint the problem with a broad brush, several important facts emerge from close studies of the available data, most notably the John Jay College of Criminal Justice study released in February 2004.

First, the majority (55.7 percent) of accused priests have had only one allegation lodged against them. Second, most of the confirmed cases of sexual abuse were perpetrated by repeat offenders; according to the John Jay study, 149 priests had ten or more allegations against them, and they accounted for 26 percent of all allegations. Third, most of the confirmed cases (over 80 percent) were male on male. Fourth, most of the confirmed cases were in large dioceses on the East and West Coasts.

It is hard to tell what to make of the first fact. Priests, like all men, are subject to temptation—indeed, if we, as Christians, believe that they are engaged in a particularly strenuous form of spiritual warfare, we might well surmise that they are subject to even greater temptations than the average layman. It is certainly possible that many of the accused are guilty, and it is also possible that they have had only one allegation lodged against them because that is the number of times that they fell—none of which excuses their sin, but it does potentially place the phenomenon in a context that is often lacking in discussions of clerical sexual abuse. (There is also the possibility that some of those who have had only one allegation lodged against them, especially years after the date of the alleged incident, are innocent.)

The second and third facts speak for themselves. Despite attempts by some victims' advocates (especially lawyers) to portray the scandal as widespread, vastly underreported, and unrelated at all to homosexual inclinations, the data seem to indicate that the cases of John J. Geoghan

and Paul Shanley more accurately represent the crisis—in other words, there were a small number of serial sex offenders in the American priesthood who were attracted to victims of the same sex. The idea that, for instance, the abolition of priestly celibacy would have prevented Geoghan's or Shanley's crimes is laughable. Even assuming that either man would have married before he was ordained, his "sexual preference" would likely have won out, despite the assurances of the Survivors' Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) that homosexuality has nothing to do with clerical sexual abuse.

And finally, the concentration of cases in the large dioceses of the East and West Coasts is significant, though not necessarily for the reason usually cited (the perceived lack of orthodoxy of such dioceses). Despite the desire to pin all transfers of priests and cover-ups of their crimes on the bishops of their dioceses (and even to allege centuries-long conspiracies among bishops that extend as high as the Vatican), the reality is likely much less *Da Vinci Code*-ish. Larger dioceses have more complex bureaucracies, and, all too often, the bishop is unaware of much of what occurs. The case of a Bernard Cardinal Law, who may have personally authorized transfers and cover-ups, is much more rare, as the rumored desire, back in 2002, of some American bishops to censure the cardinal indicates.

Witness the recent statements by Francis Cardinal George of Chicago regarding sexual-abuse cases that have occurred in his archdiocese since the passage of the charter. While acknowledging that he bears the ultimate responsibility for the actions of the archdiocese, including the implementation of the charter, he has expressed frustration at his inability to oversee the day-to-day operations of his archdiocese. Responsible (as of 2004) for over 2.4 million Catholics and 944 priests, is it any wonder that Cardinal George must rely on a bureaucracy that has clearly failed him? (Whether any diocese should be allowed to become this large is an important question, but it is one for another day.)

And yet the passage of the charter, its



implementation over the past four years, and the implications of these four facts notwithstanding, civil lawsuits against the Church continue to multiply, spreading now to smaller dioceses and involving priests, usually long dead (the vast majority of allegations made in 2005 were against deceased priests), against whom the lawsuit is often the only allegation. Unfortunately, because of the perceived extent of the crisis (which perception may not, as we have seen, reflect reality), every allegation is assumed by the media to be true; every accused priest is assumed to be a Geoghan or a Shanley; and every plaintiff is assumed to be acting only out of the goodness (or, at worst, pain) of his heart and to be entitled to whatever compensation he can wrench from the greedy fingers of a Church that still refuses to reform.

One of the latest lawsuits has been filed here in Rockford—a circumstance that seems particularly ironic, since the bishop of Rockford, Thomas Doran, a renowned canon lawyer, is widely acknowledged as the primary author of the final version of the charter.

On February 23, Donald Bondick, a 50-year-old retired postal worker from Rockford, filed a lawsuit against the diocese of Rockford and against the Conventual Franciscans of St. Bonaventure Province (based in Chicago), alleging that he was sexually abused once in 1969, at the age of 14, by a Franciscan priest, Fr. Ted Feely, who died in 1991. Bondick did not reveal the alleged abuse until June 2002, 11 years after Father Feely's death. (A second person came forward two weeks before Bondick, though his name has never been released and he has chosen, to date, not to file a lawsuit.)

So far, the story is pretty standard, and it should surprise no one that representatives from Voice of the Faithful and

SNAP were present at Mr. Bondick's news conferences in Rockford and Chicago, or that he is, as the *Rockford Register Star* reported,

being represented by two law firms with national reputations for taking on the Roman Catholic Church, mostly over allegations of clergy abuse: Jeffrey R. Anderson of Minneapolis and Kerns, Pitrof, Frost & Pearlman.

Mr. Bondick's lawsuit is attracting attention, however, because, as local TV station WTVO reported, "he claims to have seen former Bishop Arthur O'Neill having sex with a man in the steam room of a local health club" in 2003.

Mr. Bondick alleges he followed Bishop O'Neill back to his residence and confronted him about what he saw, while taping the conversation. On its website, WTVO reproduced an excerpt of the alleged conversation:

Bondick: I just want to let you know I saw what went on.

O'Neill: Well, that guy has been after me for a long time.

Bondick: I don't know how he could have been after you; you were attempting to have anal intercourse with him right in the shower. I just think if your [*sic*] going to do that, do that in private.

The lawsuit also alleges that Bishop O'Neill confessed to a diocesan official to "having sex with the man at the healthclub."

The media covering the press conferences in Rockford and Chicago either reported the allegations concerning Bishop O'Neill uncritically (as WTVO did), or they ignored them altogether, while reporting on the lawsuit. (Bishop O'Neill, the current vicar general for the diocese, is not named as a defendant in the lawsuit.)

Both courses of action are unsatisfactory from a journalistic standpoint. Those who decided not to report the allegations, presumably because they could not determine whether they are credible, implicitly called into question their own decision to run the rest of the story—after all, the same man is making both claims. And those who did report the allegations were obligated to attempt at least a minimal determination of their credibility.

How credible are the claims regarding Bishop O'Neill? Let's start with the last one. No journalist can possibly be-

lieve that the diocese would have told Mr. Bondick what Bishop O'Neill said. Moreover, it is hardly believable that Bishop Doran would continue to allow Bishop O'Neill to appear in public as a representative of the diocese (one of his chief duties as vicar general) if he had admitted to such behavior. To believe such an allegation, one would not have to believe that Bishop Doran is a scoundrel; one would have to believe that he is a fool, and no journalist who has even casually observed him throughout his career could possibly believe that.

The tape recording would appear to be more damning, though the excerpt reported by WTVO hardly indicts Bishop O'Neill—the only mention of homosexual sex (and then only an "attempt") comes from Mr. Bondick after Bishop O'Neill allegedly speaks.

The recording itself raises other questions. If Mr. Bondick followed Bishop O'Neill back to his residence from the health club, where did the tape recorder come from? Was he in the habit of taking a tape recorder to his health club?

Moreover, the First Amendment Handbook of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press points out that

Twelve states forbid the recording of private conversations without the consent of all parties. Those states are California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Washington.

At his press conferences, Mr. Bondick claimed that he held the tape recorder in plain view between himself and Bishop O'Neill. In other words, he alleges that Bishop O'Neill was aware that he was being taped and yet held an incriminating conversation with him. Even setting aside the credibility of that claim, the mere awareness or even acknowledgment of a recording device is not enough to prove consent, so any tape of the alleged conversation may still not be admissible in court. A journalist who has any experience covering civil lawsuits should certainly entertain the possibility that Mr. Bondick and his lawyers are using the tape to make a splash in the media to try to convince the diocese to settle without a trial. Indeed, Jeff Anderson & Associates boasts of settling "over 90% of the cases where monetary damages are paid and non monetary changes are implemented

to prevent further victimization."

Some media outlets may well have decided not to publish this sensational allegation because it strains credulity beyond the breaking point. At the time of the alleged health-club incident, Bishop O'Neill was 85 years old. Any journalist who has observed him over the past decade knows that, although he is intellectually quite spry, his physical health is another matter. But if this particular allegation strikes a journalist as incredible, shouldn't it raise questions about the veracity of Mr. Bondick's other allegations?

From the beginning, however, journalists have shown not even the slightest interest in examining Mr. Bondick's credibility. In fact, last July and August (six months before Mr. Bondick filed his lawsuit), the *Rock River Times*, a local weekly newspaper, took the extraordinary step of granting him pseudonymity to tell his story in a five-part series.

The editors justified their decision this way: "All non-clergy members' names have been changed due to the nature of the alleged abuse and the age of the victim at the time of the alleged abuse."

Mr. Bondick alleges he was abused at the age of 14, but in 2005, at the age of 49, he was allowed to make public allegations against a dead priest under a pseudonym. What journalistic purpose could possibly be served by such a decision?

From the standpoint of the journalists covering Mr. Bondick's February 23 press conferences, however, these stories are valuable, because of the discrepancies between Mr. Bondick's current allegations and those that he made under cover of the pseudonym "Thomas White." And yet, as I write this a month later, not a single local journalist has examined any of those discrepancies—including the reporter who wrote the five-part series for the *Rock River Times*.

Let's start with the tape of Mr. Bondick's alleged conversation with Bishop O'Neill. None of the five articles in the *Rock River Times* makes mention of a tape. The reporter, Melissa Wangall, details a conversation between Mr. Bondick and "a cleric from his boyhood church," and she includes dialogue in quotation marks, as if it were direct quotations; nowhere does she indicate that it is paraphrased. But the dialogue is quite different from the excerpt published by WTVO:

"I saw what you did with that man back there in the health club in the shower."

"Which one?"

"The man that you were anally copulating [sic]."

The cleric replied, "That man's been after me for a long time."

White said, "As I saw it, you were sodomizing him."

White began to cry. Through his tears, he said, "I was abused by Father Ted—"

"Feely," finished the cleric. "He was a Franciscan."

White asked, "How much did you know about the abuse going on in 1969?"

The cleric replied, "I didn't know too much."

White continued to cry as the religious leader stood with his head down.

After a long pause, the cleric stated, "You taught me a valuable lesson."

"How'd I do that?"

"You taught me not to do such foolish things in public places."

Let's assume that the tape existed at the time of Miss Wangall's interview of Mr. Bondick in June 2005. Then we have two possibilities: Mr. Bondick informed her of the tape, or he did not. If he did, then why doesn't the dialogue in the *Rock River Times* match the excerpt from Mr. Bondick's news conference? No conscientious reporter, informed of the existence of such a tape, would print dialogue in quotation marks without verifying it by listening to the tape himself.

Therefore, we must assume that Mr. Bondick did not inform Miss Wangall of the existence of the tape. But now we have two more problems. First, how can Miss Wangall justify placing hearsay in quotation marks? And second, if Mr. Bondick had the tape of the conversation in his possession for almost three years, how could the account of it he gave to Miss Wangall be so different from the transcript of the tape? At the very least, wouldn't he have refreshed his memory before his interview, or even transcribed the conversation and referred to his notes?

Moreover, Mr. Bondick had already been guaranteed pseudonymity, so what practical reason could he have had for keeping the tape secret from Miss Wangall? One possibility springs to mind (besides the possibility that the tape did not exist in June 2005): Perhaps Mr. Bondick did not want to show all of his cards in case

he ever did file a lawsuit. In that light, the articles in the *Rock River Times* appear as a stalking horse for Mr. Bondick's lawsuit. Get the story out there; influence the possible jury pool; gauge the public reaction; and then decide whether to proceed. If so, then Miss Wangall and the *Rock River Times* allowed themselves to be manipulated to serve Mr. Bondick's purposes.

The alleged encounter with Bishop O'Neill highlights other discrepancies between Mr. Bondick's story now and the accounts in the *Rock River Times*. As local TV station WIFR reported:

Bondick says he buried those memories a long time ago. They only recently re-surfaced—when in 2002—according to Bondick and court documents—he witnessed former Catholic Bishop Arthur O'Neil [sic] with another man in a local health club locker room.

The *Rock River Times* articles, however, give the opposite impression, ascribing "Thomas White's" long-term abuse of alcohol and drugs, his own drug-dealing, his inability to commit to relationships, his troubles with the law, and his suicidal depression to his memories of abuse. At one point, he even states: "I never forgot the abuse . . . I just kind of pushed it down." He tells of warning others to stay away from Father Feely and of telling his own son and his son's friends, in 1999, that, if "a priest touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, you have my permission to beat the s--- out of him."

If Mr. Bondick's memory of his alleged abuse returned in 2002 after the alleged encounter with Bishop O'Neill, why did "Thomas White" tell the *Rock River Times* that the encounter took place in 2003, several months after he claims to have revealed the alleged abuse to his wife? And why, in June 2005, did Mr. Bondick have a different account of why he revealed his alleged abuse, telling the *Rock River Times* that:

In 2002, an article in the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported a priest had abused former Major League baseball player and sports announcer Tom Paciorek and his brothers when they were children.

White, who was a Chicago White Sox fan, had followed Paciorek's career and the former baseball player's revelation hit home.

Sitting across from his wife at

the kitchen table, White broke down. He confessed to her the abuse he had endured over the years [sic]. After speaking with his wife, White then told his son, his mother and siblings.

Finally, after Mr. Bondick's press conferences, several media outlets claimed, in the words of the *Chicago Tribune*, that "he remains Catholic and last month became Rockford coordinator of the Catholic activist group Voice of the Faithful." Yet, in August 2005, Miss Wangall reported that

White now feels disenfranchised with the church, and hasn't regularly attended mass since 2002.

"I have more respect for organized crime," White said. "At least they admitted what they were. They never denied what they did."

Those remarks echo ones made by Mr. Bondick on March 4, 2005, in a review he wrote on *Amazon.com* of *Survivors of Predator Priests*: "The Catholic Church is criminal in the handling of these cases over the decades and centuries and should be exposed for what they truly are—monstrous criminals."

And, only a month and a half before filing his lawsuit (on January 6), he wrote a review on *IMDb.com* (of the horror movie *Hostel*), which included the lines:

If you desire real horror, just talk to any of the thousands of survivors that suffered brutal sexual abuse and torture at the hands of the Roman Catholic Clergy. Then there are the Bishops that knowingly moved these pedophile monsters all around the world—for centuries.

And a month before filing his lawsuit (on January 21), he wrote on the SNAP Survivors Network Bulletin Board that "I don't give anything to the Roman Catholic Church since coming forward in 2002. They are liars, thieves and criminals and will not receive our hard earned money, time or attendance."

When it comes time to file a lawsuit, it is, of course, better to appear as a faithful victim than as an embittered ex-Catholic. When it takes all of 15 minutes to discover the truth on the internet, however, how do journalists justify their uncritical "reporting" of Mr. Bondick's faithfulness, or of his other claims? ©

Letter From Japan

by Russell Board

Heading for Extinction

Last year, an arresting headline on page three of Tokyo's *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper read "Japan Heading for Extinction." The article bemoaned the contents of a government white paper addressing Japan's declining birthrate.

The average number of babies born to a Japanese woman during her reproductive years dropped to a record low of 1.28 in 2004, continuing a downward trend that started in the early 1980's. The number of babies born in Japan in 2004 is estimated at 1,107,000, the lowest figure since the nation's demographic statistics were first published in 1899. The National Institute of Population and Social Security projects a drop in Japan's population from 125 million in 2004 to 100 million by 2056.

The government white paper is full of gloomy statistics pointing to the dire social and economic consequences a declining population will have on the nation. There are now 25 million Japanese aged 65 or older, accounting for 20 percent of the total population, and their ranks are swelling yearly. The pension and national health-insurance systems face an impending breakdown as expenditures on the graying population outstrip

income from a shrinking labor force.

Over the past ten years, the government has spent tens of billions of dollars on measures aimed at halting the declining birthrate, but to no avail. Most of the funds have gone toward promoting maternity leave and expanding nursery-school and daycare facilities, so that working women can bear children and still hold their jobs. New proposals aim at easing the burden on mothers by cutting the overtime hours of wage earners who put in more than 60 hours per week and requiring workers to take at least 55 percent of the paid leave they are entitled to every year. (Yes, the peer pressure of the company environment keeps most Japanese workers from "deserting" their colleagues in order to take personal leave time.)

There are also calls to increase economic assistance to families struggling with the costs of rearing children. Local governments already offer substantial subsidies to parents of children born within their jurisdiction to defray the costs of childbirth, plus monthly stipends for each child during the first two to three years of life. Most localities even reimburse all medical expenses not covered by insurance until the child reaches school age. (Even foreign residents are eligible for these benefits.) Yet, in spite of these incentives, couples continue to shun the burdens of parenthood.

Indeed, marriage continues to be delayed ever longer. The average age for first marriages reached new highs in 2003, rising to 29.4 for men and 27.6 for women. Young women especially are in no hurry to take wedding vows, and they choose older, more financially stable partners when they do decide to tie the knot, forcing men to wait longer than they might otherwise.

It is not that young women are interested in the pursuit of a "career"; they are reluctant to trade an affluent lifestyle for the hardships of young family life. So-called parasite singles often continue to live at home well past the age of 30. While mom takes care of the laundry and housekeeping, they enjoy the benefit of free or low-cost room and board and maintain a high disposable income to spend on leisure travel and designer goods.

The disinclination to change from dependent to wife and mother is rein-

forced by the negative model many of these women have seen in the marriages of their parents. Often, marital relationships decay or dissolve as absentee fathers wed to the company leave mothers to shoulder the burdens of homemaking and child rearing alone. The pressures only increase after retirement, when a man suddenly finds himself at home with a woman who has built a life of her own around her children, her friends, and her hobbies, and who is not interested in spending time with a husband who wasn't there when she needed him.

The divorce rate climbed to 2.25 per 1,000 population in 2003, still well below the 4.0 rate for the United States but a significant change in a society that has traditionally viewed divorce as a shameful failure that brings dishonor to the families involved. For the reasons cited above, the figure has risen most rapidly among older couples: According to the Ministry of Health, between 1973 and 1997, the number of divorces per year among couples married for more than 30 years jumped more than eightfold, while the overall number of divorces doubled.

Of course, these figures do not take into account the phenomenon of "home divorce," wherein husbands and wives live separate lives while continuing to share living quarters for the sake of financial advantages and wider family harmony. It is understandable that daughters are not eager to sign up for a similar arrangement.

Another factor contributing to the reluctance to have children is a growing sense of anxiety about how they will turn out. Breakdowns in classroom discipline, school bullying, teenage suicides, and widely publicized incidents of juvenile crime have left many fearful about the prospect of rearing children in today's social climate.

In June 2005, a series of incidents grabbed headlines and sent shock waves throughout Japanese society. In Nagasaki, a 12-year-old boy assaulted his 11-year-old sister with a baseball bat and left her bleeding on the floor with a fractured skull and jaw. In Yamaguchi, an 18-year-old high-school student tossed a bomb made of gunpowder and a glass bottle into a classroom, injuring 58 of his classmates.

In Fukuoka, a 15-year-old boy stabbed his 17-year-old brother ten times in the back, neck, and stomach with a kitchen



Nicholas Gantie

knife, then drowned him in a bathtub. And in Tokyo, a 15-year-old high-school student clubbed his father with a dumbbell and slashed his throat before stabbing his mother in the chest. He then set off a gas explosion in their apartment in an attempt to cover up the gruesome murders.

Much subsequent media discussion focused on a search for common links that might give some insight into what could provoke these youths to erupt in such violent behavior. Family tensions, school social problems, violent video games, and the easy availability of bomb-making information on the internet were all cited as contributing factors. As no easily identifiable "cause" could be pinpointed, however, many parents confessed to feeling at a loss as to what to do to safeguard their own children.

Perhaps surprisingly, the primary worry of most is not that their children will become victims of violence but that they will turn into perpetrators. Among Japanese young people, traditional Confucian respect for authority has all but dissolved in the solvent of nihilistic and hedonistic global youth culture, pervasively disseminated through the entertainment media. Parents feel powerless to teach or enforce moral standards that have been stripped of any religious, philosophical, or cultural grounding. In this climate, parenting can appear a risky business.

In spite of these social factors, the government continues to view the low-birthrate problem as an economic one and tries to address it with economic solutions. But why should it be necessary to bribe people to enter into the joys of parenthood? Becoming a parent has always entailed sacrificing time, material goods, personal interests, and ambitions for the sake of one's children. Most humans throughout history have thought the sacrifice worthwhile. It appears that few Japanese today are inclined to make it.

Life expectancy in Japan is 85.33 years for women, 78.36 years for men (as of 2003). These numbers are higher than ever in Japan's history—and higher than anywhere else in the world. Likewise, the standard of living is extremely high compared with earlier periods and with other nations. It is difficult to believe that rearing children in today's affluent Japanese society is really more burdensome than in past generations when life was much harder or than in poor nations where the birthrate is much higher.

A society that lacks the will to perpet-

uate itself exhibits symptoms of a grave spiritual illness, a suicidal tendency that verges on a collective death wish. Too many Japanese young people lack both the confidence and the desire to take on the challenges and responsibilities of parenthood. Some view children as an obstacle to achieving the lifestyles idealized in advertising and entertainment media. Others see no reason to bring children into a nation and a world they perceive to be headed toward a future of economic insecurity, environmental destruction, and social disintegration.

The sickness of soul evidenced by these attitudes will not be solved by increasing the availability of daycare and maternity leave. Hope for the future, an appreciation for the value of the gift of life, and an understanding of its meaning and purpose—these commodities are sorely lacking in a society awash in an abundance of material goods. Yet without these, the prospects for reversing the declining birthrate are dim.

*Russell Board writes from
Saitama City, Japan.*

Letter From New York City

by Mark G. Brennan

Family Matters



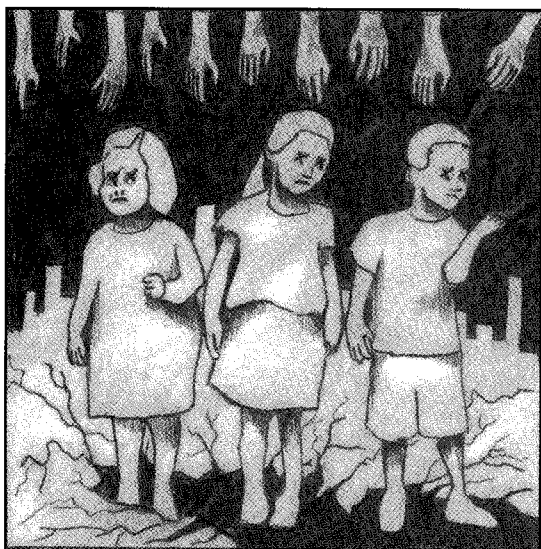
Cesar Rodriguez, a 27-year-old unemployed security guard, had it in for 7-year-old Nixzmary Brown, the daughter of Nixzaliz Santiago, his common-law wife. After losing his job a few days before Christmas, Rodriguez increased the frequency of his daily beatings of the helpless, undernourished four-foot-tall girl. Police records indicate that Rodriguez had been beating her for 18 months. When he tired of his savage poundings, he would tie her to a chair that he then anchored to a radiator in a sealed-off room. Neighbors living below claimed to have heard the child ramming the radiator in an attempt to free herself from the painful bondage. Rodriguez rarely allowed Nixzmary to leave the room. If she wanted to eat, he gave her cat food. When she needed to relieve herself, he made her do so in a litter box. We may

never know why Rodriguez treated her this way. We do know, however, that, on the night of January 11, life became catastrophic for Nixzmary Brown.

That evening, after watching her five siblings eat yogurt, Nixzmary, starving and weak, struggled to get some for herself. Although suffering excruciating hunger pangs, Nixzmary probably figured it would be worth the almost-certain beating that the atavistic Rodriguez would deliver for undermining his tyrannical authority. After learning that Nixzmary had broken his rule against her consuming anything other than cat food, Rodriguez angrily confronted the child. Comporting herself like a saint, Nixzmary admitted she took the yogurt without his permission.irate, Rodriguez locked Nixzmary back in her prison and returned to his computer. When his printer jammed, one of his stepsons fingered Nixzmary as the culprit. This was the final straw: Rodriguez burst into the little girl's hellhole of a prison and began beating her with his fists and whipping her with his belt. When she started to lose consciousness, he carried her into the bathroom where he shoved her underwater. Finally, he smashed her battered head against the faucet and let her naked, limp body flop to the bathroom floor. District Attorney Catherine Dagonese succinctly described the child's final moments of life: "She yelled out 'Mommy, mommy' and her mother did nothing. She did nothing while her very own child was lying dying in front of her." Thus, we witnessed the ignominious end to the brief and heartbreaking life of seven-year-old Nixzmary Brown.

As upsetting as we now know the last few days of Nixzmary's life to have been, the subsequent reaction of the press, the public, the city government, and the victim's immediate family has been appalling in terms of finger pointing and an inability to recognize, let alone accept, responsibility for this crime. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg kicked off the irresponsibility crusade by commenting the day after the murder, "We, as a city, have failed this child. We should do everything we can to make sure we don't fail the next child." With such a statement, Bloomberg held the entire city responsible. When everyone is responsible, no one is responsible. Bloomberg's poorly chosen words only exacerbate society's blindness to cause and effect in the criminal arena.

Taken in context, the responses to this



horrific crime leave one with little hope for the wretched and life-threatening existence of other abused children who are “falling through the cracks” of New York City’s gargantuan welfare system. Despite budgeting \$2.2 billion for 2006, New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services’ army of 7,000 bureaucrats will continue to loll in their union-protected sinecures while filicide continues apace in Gotham.

Ultimate responsibility for the death of Nixzmary Brown belongs with Cesar Rodriguez, her murderer and the sire of two of her stepsiblings. However, other parties not involved in the actual cold-blooded slaughter of the child deserve blame. Nixzmary’s mother, who had six children by four different men, should have removed her child from this life-threatening monster with whom she shackled up as a common-law wife. At Nixzmary’s funeral, Lurma Paulino, the mother of one of the victim’s classmates, stated the obvious fact that “a mother’s duty is to defend her child,” a concept completely lost on the city’s mayor and the minions of dogooders who have flooded the airwaves with calls for increased spending and system-wide reform. In a brazen abrogation of her maternal duty, Nixzaliz Santiago tried to save her own hide in a jailhouse interview a few days after her arrest. “I’m scared, I’m scared. They’re not going to believe I didn’t kill my daughter. I’m innocent. I didn’t kill her.”

Highlighting the tragedy of out-of-wedlock births and random family associations, Nixzmary’s biological father, a Pakistani immigrant using the single moniker “Mian,” deserves special mention. Shortly after impregnating Nixzmary’s mother, Mian opted to have no

further role in the life of his progeny. Eerily, the first time he met his daughter was at her wake, where he magnanimously placed a rose in her casket before rushing out in a stream of crocodile tears. Of course, neither elected officials nor the local media have thought to castigate publicly his complete absence from his daughter’s life. Expecting him to protect his child from a murderer is a concept that is foreign to New York’s chattering classes, since orders of protection and doormen in high-rise apartment buildings suffice to thwart physical harm on the Upper West Side. A real father would have confronted the child’s mother when (as reported in the tabloid press) his daughter missed 46 consecutive days of school. A real father would also have sprung into action when neighbors reported seeing the grossly underweight child covered with bruises. Alas, in an era of anonymous sperm donation and abortion on demand, it is no wonder that biological fathers abrogate their primary duty—the physical protection of their offspring.

The funeral, coming a week after her death, provided further illustration of the unnatural familial behavior extant in this odd grouping of sex partners and their luckless children as well as today’s inevitable Oprah-esque response to human tragedy. Omar Santiago, Nixzmary’s maternal uncle who came to mourn his murdered niece at her final Mass, fell to the floor of the church in a maudlin display of grief. His outburst was only alleviated when New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, doing a perfect imitation of Dr. Phil, walked over and, as the *New York Times* delicately reported, “embraced the man. It was a long embrace, and they patted each other on the back.” While this might make great copy for hypersensitive excuse makers, the rest of us could only wish that Mr. Santiago had been equally

unrestrained in attempting to rescue his niece from Cesar Rodriguez’s predations. In fact, one wonders why Mr. Santiago never intervened when he learned that his sister’s boyfriend appeared in her life after receiving a dishonorable discharge from the Army for storing child pornography on his personal computer. Instead, a seven-year-old child who never had the most basic parental protection suffered the further indignity of having her funeral Mass turned into a tragicomic farce by a performing relative.

The list of those who could have intervened but did not continues *ad nauseam*, from the neighbors who heard Nixzmary banging the radiator nightly to her teachers and school administrators who did not make the necessary investigations during her 46 consecutive days of absence. Predictably, the neighbors remain anonymous in today’s noncensorious media, while the teachers’ union leader issued such a flurry of press releases defending the remiss educators that it immediately brought to mind Shakespeare’s hackneyed quotation about the obvious guilt of those who protest too much.

We will not stop filicide anywhere until those responsible are held accountable rather than excused the way a pet owner might forgive his dog for an “accident” on the living-room carpet. Sending Nixzmary’s parents to prison for the rest of their lives and spending more than the billions already budgeted for child-welfare services will not lessen the frequency of such atrocities. Until we start holding responsible those nearest to the crime—those who have a duty to intervene—all the hot air and high dudgeon from elected officials, union representatives, and “family” members will only continue to enrage those with any sense of justice.

Mark G. Brennan writes from New York City.

LIBERAL ARTS

BONO BE THY NAME

“Earlier attempts by churches to connect to youth culture have usually involved ministers in open-toed sandals strumming acoustic guitars and singing Kumbaya to the general embarrassment of all. Yet, in parishes from California to Maine, worshippers are flocking to hear U2 classics such as Beautiful Day, Pride and Peace on Earth rolled in to a service of prayer.

“However, ear plugs are passed out with the Bibles and hymn sheets for those who prefer organ music.

“The U2 Eucharist was devised by the Rev Paige Blair, a parish priest in York Harbor, Maine, and it has since spread through word-of-mouth and on clerical websites.”

—from “The gospel according to U2 and Bono,” by Stephen McGinty, the Scotsman (April 3)

The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Seasons and Travels in the New Old West

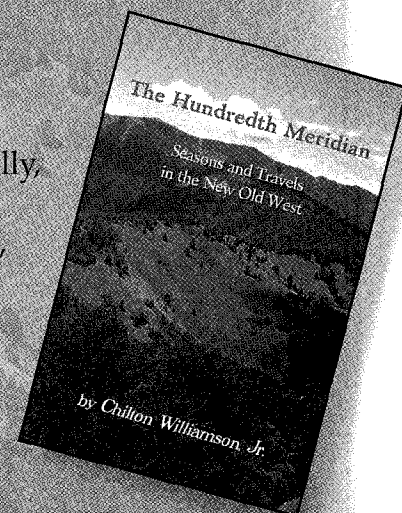
What the Old West had that the New West increasingly lacks are, finally, reality and dignity—the reality of what is basic to human experience, the dignity that comes from acceptance of the physical trials, dangers, hardships, and experience which accompany that reality.

—From the Foreword

Praise for earlier work by Chilton Williamson, Jr.:

"Williamson proves himself a stylish writer with a deft touch in creating three-dimensional characters, and in bringing the bleak beauty of the Wyoming outback to vivid life."—Don Campbell, *Los Angeles Times*

"A novel of wit, intelligence, and high style, enriched with many fresh observations of the eroding American West."—Edward Abbey on *Desert Light*.



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A Balkan Tragedy

For the past two-and-a-half millennia, our civilization has cultivated tragedy as an art form that articulates some of the key problems of our existence. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*—these works speak timeless truths in an ever-contemporary language.

In the case of Serbia's former president Slobodan Milosevic, reality has proved equal to inspired imagination. His life, which ended under suspicious circumstances in a prison cell at The Hague on March 11, could have come straight out of Shakespeare. All of the necessary ingredients were there: ambition, pride, power, violence, a malevolently overbearing wife, manipulation, duplicity, hubris, fall—and, finally, fortitude in misfortune, soon to be followed by posthumous redemption among the people he had let down.

Milosevic's 64 years can be divided into four periods of unequal duration and significance. The first, from his birth in 1941 to his meteoric rise to power in early 1987, was the longest and least interesting. The only unusual element in his early biography is the suicide of both of his parents, who had separated when he was a child. At 24, he married his only sweetheart, Mirjana Markovic, the illegitimate daughter of a high-ranking communist official. She was neurotic, uncompromisingly hard-left in her politics, ambitious, and able to dominate "her Slobo" until the very end.

To all appearances, until 1987, Milosevic was an unremarkable apparatchik. His solid party credentials—he joined the League of Communists as a high-school senior in 1959—were essential to his professional advancement. After graduating from Belgrade's school of law in 1964, he held a variety of business-administration posts, eventually becoming director of a major bank and, briefly, its representative in New York. By the early 80's, he increasingly turned to politics and made his way up the party ladder by forging alliances and friendships that were pragmatic rather than ideological. His name remained relatively unknown outside the ranks of the *nomenklatura*.

Then came the turning point. As president of the League of Communists

of Serbia, Milosevic traveled in April 1987 to the town of Kosovo Polje, in the restive southern Serbian province of Kosovo, to quell the protests by local Serbs who were unhappy with the lack of support they were getting from Belgrade in the face of ethnic-Albanian pressure. When the police started dispersing the crowd using batons, Milosevic stopped them and uttered the words that were to change his life and that of a nation: "No one is allowed to beat you people; no one will ever hit you again," he told the cheering crowd.

Weary of two generations of Serbian communist leaders who were subservient to Tito and reluctant to advance their republic's interests (lest they be accused of "greater Serbian nationalism"), ordinary Serbs responded with enthusiasm. The word of a new kind of leader spread like wildfire. Milosevic's populism worked wonders at first, enabling him to eliminate all political opponents within the party leadership of Serbia at a marathon 30-hour Central Committee session in September 1987. Huge rallies in Belgrade's Confluence Park (1988) and in Kosovo (1989) to mark the 600th anniversary of the historic Battle of Kosovo reflected the genuine popularity that he enjoyed in Serbia, Montenegro, and Serbian-inhabited parts of Bosnia and Croatia.

Far from proclaiming an agenda for expansion, as his accusers later alleged, his speech in Kosovo was full of old ideological clichés and "Yugoslav" platitudes:

Equal and harmonious relations among Yugoslav peoples are a necessary condition for the existence of Yugoslavia and for it to find its way out of the crisis and, in particular, they are a necessary condition for its economic and social prosperity . . . Internal and external enemies . . . organize their activity against multinational societies mostly by fomenting national conflicts. At this moment, we in Yugoslavia are behaving as if we have never had such an experience.

The precise nature of his long-term



agenda was never stated, however, because it had not been defined. He was able to gain followers from widely different camps, including hard-line party loyalists as well as anticommunist nationalists, because all tended to project their hopes, aspirations, and fears onto Milosevic—even though those hopes and aspirations were often mutually incompatible.

The key issue was the constitutional framework within which the Serbs should seek their future. They were unhappy with Tito's arrangements, which kept them divided into five units in the old Yugoslav federation. Milosevic wanted to redefine the nature of that federation, rather than abolish it. Then and throughout his life, he was a "Yugoslav" rather than a "Greater Serb." He was so deeply steeped in the communist legacy of his formative years—and so utterly unable to resist pressure from his doctrinaire wife—that, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he kept the old insignia with the red star, together with the leadership structure and mindset of the old Titoist order.

The tensions of this period could have been resolved by the development of a clear strategy once the war broke out—first, in Croatia (in summer 1991); then, in Bosnia (in the spring of 1992). This did not happen. In the third phase of Milosevic's career, from mid-1991 to October 5, 2000, a cynically manipulative Mr. Hyde finally prevailed over the putative national leader, Dr. Jekyll. As the fighting raged around Vukovar and Dubrovnik, he made countless contradictory statements, always stressing that "Serbia is not at war."

By blithely recognizing the secessionist republics, the "international community" effectively became a combatant in the wars of Yugoslav secession. Its "mediators" accepted a role that was not only subordinate but squalid. Lord David Ow-

en, prominent among them, conceded that Tito's boundaries were arbitrary and should have been redrawn at the time of Yugoslavia's disintegration: "[T]o rule out any discussion or opportunity for compromise in order to head off war was an extraordinary decision," he wrote,

to have stuck unyieldingly to the internal boundaries of the six republics within the former Yugoslavia as being the boundaries for independent states, was a folly far greater than that of premature recognition itself.

Still, he and a legion of other mediators stuck, unyieldingly, to that formula. As I wrote in *Chronicles* nine years ago,

The Serbs' striving to remain part of one state when Yugoslavia started disintegrating—a desire as natural as it is reasonable—was proclaimed from inside the Beltway to be the deadliest of sins by those whose goal is a world in which any bonds of loyalty born out of centuries of shared experience will be eradicated. . . . Such policy is shaped by people who have failed to recognize—or, worse still, understand but do not care—that the same forces which have torn Bosnia asunder are also present in many American cities, as well as in Marseilles, Berlin, and Amsterdam.

Milosevic's diplomatic ineptitude and his chronic inability to grasp the importance of lobbying and public relations in Washington and other Western capitals enabled the secessionists to have a free run of the media with the simplistic notion that "the butcher of the Balkans" was overwhelmingly, even exclusively, guilty of all the horrors that had befallen the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, far from seeking the completion of a "Greater Serbia" project while he had the military wherewithal to do so (1991-95), Milosevic attempted to fortify his domestic position in Belgrade by trading in the Western Serbs (in the Krajina and Bosnia) for Western benevolence.

It worked for a while. "The Serbian leader continues to be a necessary diplomatic partner," the *New York Times* opined in November 1996, a year after the Dayton Agreement ended the war in Bosnia, thanks to Milosevic's pressure on the Bosnian Serb leadership. His status as

a permanent fixture in the Balkan landscape seemed secure.

That all changed with the escalation of the crisis in Kosovo. His belated refusal at Rambouillet to sign on yet another dotted line paved the way for NATO's illegal bombing of Serbia in the spring of 1999. For one last time, the Serbs rallied under the leader many of them no longer trusted, aware that the alternative was to accept the country's open-ended Balkanization. For one last time, they were let down: Milosevic saved Clinton's skin by capitulating in June of that year and letting NATO occupy Kosovo just as the bombing campaign was running out of steam.

The ensuing mass exodus of Kosovo's quarter-million Serbs and the torching of their homes and churches by KLA terrorists did not prevent Milosevic from pretending that his superior statesmanship, embodied in the unenforceable U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, had saved the country's integrity. The subsequent reconstruction effort in Serbia was used as propaganda to improve the rating of his own Socialist Party of Serbia and his wife's minuscule "Yugoslav United Left."

For many Serbs, this was the final straw. Refusing to recognize the change of mood, in mid-2000, Milosevic followed his wife's advice and called a snap election, hoping to secure his position for another four years. He was unable to beat his chief challenger, Vojislav Kostunica, in the first round and succumbed to a wave of popular protest when he tried to deny Kostunica's victory in the closely contested runoff.

His downfall on October 5, 2000, would not have been possible, however, if the military and the security services had not abandoned him. There had been too many defeats and too many wasted opportunities over the previous decade and a half for the security chiefs to continue trusting Milosevic implicitly. Their refusal to fire on the crowds—as his half-demented wife allegedly demanded on that day—sealed Milosevic's fate. After five months' powerless isolation in his suburban villa, he was arrested and taken to Belgrade's central prison. On June 28, 2001, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic arranged for his transfer to The Hague Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal, in violation of Serbia's laws and constitution.

The final four years of Milosevic's life were spent in prison. During this time, the haughty and arrogant know-it-all of

previous years rapidly evolved into a hard-working, superbly focused, and efficient lawyer who conducted his own complex defense. He was helped by an indictment that was hastily concocted at the height of the bombing campaign in May 1999 to serve political purposes.

In preparing his defense, Milosevic was initially guided by personal motives. By the end of 2003, however, he came to realize that, regardless of his own destiny, what he was doing had a wider historical significance. He was accused of "genocide," a crime that places collective stigma on a nation, not just its leader. Furthermore, the accusation of a "joint criminal conspiracy" intent on creating a "Greater Serbia" was transformed by the tribunal into an attempt to misrepresent two centuries of Serbian history as an open-ended quest for aggressive expansion. As John Laughland wrote in the *Spectator* last year, the Milosevic trial has shown the futility of trying to submit political decisions to the judgment of criminal law:

Because it seeks to comprehend war as the result of the decisions of individuals, and not as the consequence of conflict between states, modern international humanitarian law sees trees but no wood. In the Milosevic trial, the role of the other Yugoslav leaders in starting the war—especially those who declared secession from Yugoslavia—is grossly obscured, as is that of the countless Western politicians and institutions who were intimately involved at every stage of the Yugoslav conflict, and who encouraged the secessions.

Grasping the extent to which his trial was also the trial of the Serbian people, Milosevic succeeded, for the first time in his life, in transcending the limitations of ideology and egotism that had blinkered him for so long. He turned the trial, heralded by the Western media as a new Nuremberg, into a political embarrassment for the "international community." His defense, effective and at times brilliant, finally blended Milosevic's personal interest with the interest of his people. When I met him at his cell in June 2004, he told me that he might never get out of there, but he was certain that his "refutation of [chief prosecutor Carla] del Ponte's ridiculous indictment would set the record of history straight." ◊

COMMONWEAL

Born Again Again

by Jack Trotter

A**b**ortionists are apt to be a mite diffident in speaking of their calling—hardly surprising, given the nature of their work and its attendant hazards. How many abortionists have you encountered socially? None, I'd wager. After all, open avowal of their daily labors would hardly invite exchange of further pleasantries. Picture the scene over the hors d'oeuvres spread at your local Women's League fundraiser: "Hello, I'm Gladys McNulty. I'm the nutritionist at Edengrove—you know, the assisted-living facility?"

"Hello. Pleased to meet you, Gladys. I'm Ted Fisher. I do abortions for Planned Parenthood at the clinic down on South Main."

"Oh, how . . . nice."

"Gladys, I believe I know Laura, your daughter. The resemblance is striking."

"Oh, pardon me, there's my old friend Maggie Burns. Haven't seen that gal in ages! So good to have chatted with you, Ted!"

Canapés, anyone? Well, let's just say that any self-regarding abortionist in America these days isn't exactly eager for publicity. Apart from the clinic bombers (God's own assassins) and the death threats, we might note that there is, more than 30 years after *Roe v. Wade*, still a stigma attached to the performing of abortions. Very few aspiring physicians express on their medical-school applications an interest in becoming an abortionist. Maybe the nomenclature is a problem. (Gynecological Career Counselor, perhaps?) Indeed, abortionists are rapidly becoming an endangered species. Soon, we may have to begin importing them from the People's Republic of China, whence we get so many other useful things.

In any case, abortionists rarely grant interviews or allow reporters to observe them at work. That is why Arkansas abortionist William Harrison's recent appearance on ABC's *Nightline* was something of a sensation. For the 70-year-old Harrison is far from reticent about his long and dedicated career as an exterminator of fe-

tuses. On the contrary, he is a man with a mission, one who employs a passionate evangelical rhetoric in defense of his beleaguered vocation. Interviewed by Martin Bashir (infamous for his *Living With Michael Jackson* exposé) at his clinic in Fayetteville, the silver-haired, avuncular Harrison reveals that he may have aborted as many as 12,000 fetuses since *Roe* removed the matter from the purview of the states. (He's not quite sure of the number, since he hasn't "counted.") With what appears to be complete sincerity, the soft-spoken ob-gyn envisions himself as a sort of angel of mercy, a Florence Nightingale in drag, if you will. Repeatedly, he speaks of his mostly poor and unwed clients as women who are "born again" as a result of the service that he provides. When Bashir asks, "How do you reflect on your career?" Harrison responds in the pastoral tone of a man of the cloth:

I've had one of the most emotionally satisfying careers that I can imagine anyone having. I can't tell you how satisfying it is, when two weeks after a young woman has come in distraught and thinking that her life is ruined, and she comes back two weeks after the abortion and she is a new woman. She's been given her life back.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* in November 2005, Harrison speaks even more revealingly of how he first realized that a pregnant woman might, in effect, be held hostage by the life in her womb. The year was 1967, and he was still a medical student. He recalls how he informed a poor woman with a "distended belly" that she was pregnant. Expecting a pleased response, Harrison was stunned when she lamented, "Oh, God, doctor. I was hoping it was cancer." This seems to have been the defining moment in the good doctor's ministry. Never again would he assume that pregnancy always comes as a blessing. Nor does he appear to have looked back in doubt, though it must be noted that, although he continued for a number of years to divide his time between delivering babies and aborting them, he gave up the former practice in 1991. Is it possible that he had begun to feel troubled by the apparent contradiction in his dual practice? When he speaks of the nature of

the life that must be sacrificed so that his patients may be "born again," Harrison is not altogether consistent. In speaking with Bashir, he claims that he considers the life of the mother far more important than the "little blob of tissue" that she carries within her, which is not a "person" but only a "potential person." He claims that the fetus is "not a baby to me until the mother tells me it's a baby." Does that mean, then, that it is the mother herself who confers the gift of personhood? Yet Harrison refuses to abort during the third trimester, calling such a practice "infanticide" because, at that point in the pregnancy, the fetus can survive outside the womb and may feel some pain. But if the "little blob of tissue" becomes an infant (presumably a "person") after six months of pregnancy, then apparently it is no longer the mother who confers this elusive status. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Harrison is untroubled by this muddle. All moral contradictions are dissolved by a soothing ointment of compassion. In the *Times* profile, he says that "We try to make sure that [the mother] doesn't ever feel guilty for what she feels she has to do."

Thus when Harrison's expectant mothers of potential persons arrive at his Fayetteville clinic for their initial consultation, they find that the doctor's thoughtful nurse has posted some reassuring statistics on the exam-room mirror: "One of every four pregnant women in the U.S. chooses abortion," they learn, and "A third of all women in this country will have at least one abortion by the time they're thirty-five." According to the *Times*, the nurse asks, "You think there's room in hell for all those women?" Clearly, Harrison and his nurse understand the fears of their Arkansas flock. One 17-year-old mother seems quite confident that the fetus she's carrying (at five weeks) is not really a baby, "not until it's developed." But perhaps she is not quite so confident as she pretends, so the nurse assures her, "It's completely formed [at] about nine weeks. Yours is more like a chicken yolk."

When Harrison's expectant mothers return to the clinic and are strapped in for "delivery," they find themselves surrounded by "paintings of butterflies and flowers" and lulled by the mellifluous harmonies of "an easy-listening station on the radio." Before the procedure commences, they are sedated intravenously with

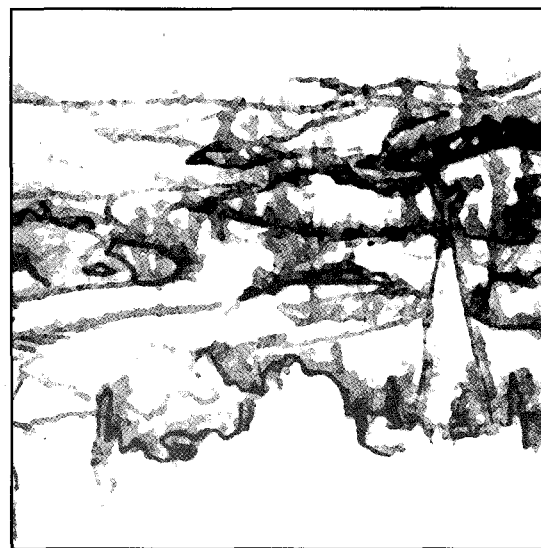
Versed, a drug that will erase any memory “of what happens during the 20 minutes [they are] in the operating room.” Harrison and his nurse work with brisk efficiency, but not without concern for their often young and apprehensive charges. They are led toward the moment of rebirth with a steady patter of paternal concern: “How’re you doing up there?” the doctor asks, and, receiving the expected affirmative, he replies, “Good girl.” He is always careful to alert them when the moment of truth arrives: “You’re going to hear a sucking sound,” he intones. When the “born again” experience is completed, one of Harrison’s young flock weeps tears of gratitude: “It was a lot easier than I thought it would be,” she says. “I thought it was going to be horrible.” How comforting it must be to know that the sucking sound she heard was little more than a bothersome bit of breakfast food being vacuumed out of her belly.

So what does an abortionist do after an exhausting day at the clinic? Some, no doubt, play the links in air-conditioned golf carts like other physicians. Some—the workaholics—may spend their leisure time pouring over trade journals, wondering whether they can afford the latest ASCO SU-505 Electric-Manual Suction Unit (polycarbonate jar optional; foot pedal included). William Harrison, though, is not your average abortionist. It seems that he has literary ambitions. I discovered this quite by chance when running an *Amazon.com* search using Harrison’s name. Not only has this extraordinary abortionist written a novel (about which more below), but he is also an avid amateur reviewer of books for Amazon. What is most interesting about this for present purposes is that Harrison reveals as much about himself in these reviews as he does about the books he chooses to review, although those choices are themselves revealing. What emerges amid a litter of solecisms and misspellings is a portrait of a liberal rationalist whose liberation from hardscrabble Arkansas Methodism began during childhood and whose lifelong struggle against “fundamentalists” of every conceivable stripe has assumed veritably Manichaean dimensions.

In a review of Sam Harris’s *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, Harrison claims to be proud of his roots in rural Arkansas, where he first picked cotton (during the Depression era) at the age of four, though he is quick to point out that his people were not “poor white trash” but the “gentle poor.” At the

age of 12, his “childish faith in the Christian tradition” was “squashed” when, precociously, he read the “Good Book” twice over from cover to cover. Looking back on the event, he notes that the “Catholic church has always wisely banned the reading of the Bible for its own parishoners [sic]” since a “perusale [sic] of the entire text will pretty much wipe out the idea of a supreme being that is omnipresent, omniscient and [sic] omnipotent, and even more incredible, composed of three literally unbelievable [sic] beings.” Harrison lauds Harris for writing a book “that should destroy completely for any rational person that reads it, the ridiculous [sic] and unprovable ideas that are behind all the worlds [sic] religions [sic] and their ‘holy books.’” After some fulminating about the looming threat of a fundamentalist takeover of America under the auspices of the Bush administration, Harrison prophesies a “religious [sic] war with Islam in the next few years.” Now this prediction of a religious war with Islam is, you will agree, pretty darned insightful, especially since it was penned in 2004. But Harrison doesn’t see any hope of avoiding such a disaster short of “some miraculous outbreak of reason,” in which, of course, he places no faith, because he is a rationalist. Indeed, in a review of Will Durant’s *Story of Civilization, Vol. IX: The Age of Voltaire*, Harrison expresses his almost giddy admiration for Durant, that purveyor of Enlightenment platitudes *sans pareil*. He discovered Durant’s *Story of Civilization* series in the 1980’s and declares that reading it was “the greatest intellectual experience of my lifetime.” One is reminded here, perhaps, of Coleridge’s discovery of Immanuel Kant, or of Kierkegaard’s first fateful reading of *Hamlet*.

By now, you may have guessed that Harrison’s political convictions are not conservative, nor even Republican. Back in 1972, he ran unsuccessfully for Congress on a Democratic ticket and, shortly thereafter, made the acquaintance of the two people who remain his political idols down to the present: Bill and Hillary Clinton. In a review of Bill Clinton’s *My Life*, Harrison is proud to inform his Amazon readers that he has known the Clintons “personally since they moved to Fayetteville to teach at the University of Arkansas Law School in the early 70s.” Curiously, he notes that he “met Hillary first as her physician and she soon introduced me to her boyfriend, Bill.” Now, since Hillary did not bear a child until 1980, we may be excused a certain prurient interest in pre-



Elizabeth Wolf

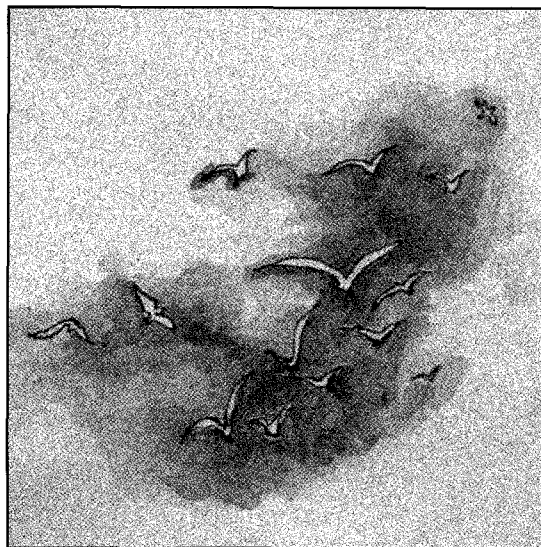
cisely what capacity Harrison served as her physician. But he (perhaps coyly) doesn’t tell all. Instead, we learn that he became an active campaigner for Bill Clinton and was honored, along with his wife,

to be among the few extremely close friends, family members and invited guests at Bill and Hillary’s small wedding, although we neither one [sic] realized at the time what an honor they had bestowed upon us.

You will note that in writing this review Harrison has remembered to turn on his spell checker, but his prose remains a bit ambiguous. Were he and his wife among the “close friends,” or simply mingling with the “invited guests”? Did he introduce himself to the Rodham clan as her personal physician?

Such intriguing questions aside, we note that Harrison reviews the garrulous 1,000-page *My Life* as if it were divinely inspired. His gushing admiration for the Clintons would be almost touching if it were not so maudlin:

I am proud . . . to have had an opportunity to read this book, which outlines and showcases some of the most extraordinary persons and events in U.S. history. You go, Bill and Hillary. You both have given already an almost unsurpassed contribution to our nation’s history, which will judge you with a much more reasoned and rational mind than the idiots who have hated you, seemingly for no more reason [sic] Christ was hated—you aspired to, and tried to, make our



world a better place.

Regarding Clinton's extra-political career as a serial philanderer, Harrison admits that Bill was only human and did at times, especially in the early years, have some trouble "keeping his sword in his pants." But most of the rumors and allegations, he says, are unfounded swill propagated by the enemies of truth (and they are legion). Why is the rational doctor so sure of this? In a review of David

Maraniss's *First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton*, he explains: "I have yet to take a medical history from any woman who ever admitted that Bill Clinton ever made an inappropriate move on her."

While it would be pleasant to dwell at greater length on Harrison's book reviews (in which, for instance, we find Al Franken likened unto his "spiritual father, Will Rogers" and Richard North Patterson to Dostoyevsky), I have promised to say something about this literary abortionist's own book, a novel. Published in 1999 by M & M Press in Fayetteville (primarily a rather obscure publisher of legal tomes), Harrison's *There Is a Bomb in Gilead* is, as one might expect, a pro-abortion fairy tale. Gilead is the name of the Southern town where one amiable Dr. Hobson runs an abortion ministry besieged by crazed and sinister fundamentalists bent on shutting his benevolent operation down. Since Harrison's own clinic in Fayetteville was similarly besieged (by his own account) back in the 1980's, we would not be wrong, perhaps, in assuming that this novel serves a certain flattering-autobiographical purpose even as it depicts our dauntless ob-gyn's fundamentalist tormentors as self-tormented onanists and, of course, racist bigots. Nor will we

be terribly shocked to learn that the heroine in the novel is a teenaged girl who has been twice raped by her father before being impregnated by a married employer, and who now seeks deliverance from her predicament at Hobson's willing hands. Does Hobson have a choice? No, he has a calling, but powers and principalities are arrayed against him. Will goodness and compassion prevail? Well, William Harrison will be happy to send you a copy of the book so that you can find out for yourself. It's available for \$9.95 plus tax from Fayetteville Women's Clinic, 1011 N. College, Fayetteville, AR 72701. Know that, in purchasing a copy, you will be contributing to Dr. Harrison's retirement fund, helping to ensure that his declining years will be replete with serene afternoons of literary endeavor and nights of untroubled slumber. But then again, perhaps he may toss and turn a bit over the memory of the woman who, according to the *L.A. Times*, returned to his clinic nine times—the young woman who, like one of those backsliding believers for whom the original experience didn't quite stick, was born again . . . and again.

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

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Crash Course

Last month, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences held its 78th annual awards ceremony. Dreamt up by Louis B. Mayer in 1927, the Academy's advertised mission was to confer legitimacy on an industry widely belittled at the time for the vulgar sensationalism of its entertainments. It was also tasked with cleaning up films before would-be censors forced the issue. One wonders what Mayer would think, had he lived to see his Academy give this year's Best Song Oscar to "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp," the charming ditty from *Hustle and Flow*? Of course, he wouldn't really be in a position to complain. Despite pretensions, pimping has been the Academy's real mission from the first. The Oscar remains an infallible box-office lure, attracting untold millions to films of dubious value.

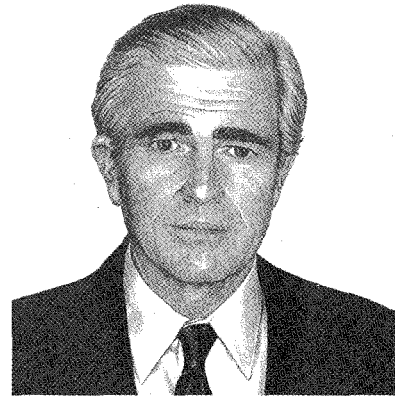
Everyone knows the Academy Awards ceremony is an exercise in huckstering. In spite of itself, however, the Academy sometimes gets things right, as this year's Best Picture Award proves. The Academy justifiably honored *Crash*, a small independent film that had the temerity to tell the truth about class and race in today's America and did so with a thoroughly cheeky mix of wit and poignancy. When I reviewed the film last July, I had only one reservation: I thought it exceedingly clever but emotionally thin. I no longer think this.

Spurred by its Oscar win and its theatrical rerelease, I decided to give *Crash* another look. Watching it again, I realized it cuts much deeper than I had originally supposed.

The movie works like an ever-turning kaleidoscope. It keeps shaking the shards of our ethnic, racial, and economic differences into changing patterns, inflected variously with rage, comedy, recrimination, horror, and, improbably enough, redemption. To do this, director Paul Haggis and his co-screenwriter, Bobby Maresco, put 12 principal characters of various class, ethnic, and racial identities in motion—people who would rarely, if ever, have any personal dealings with one another. Haggis then sees to it that they crash into one another's lives through a series of deliberately improbable but

progressively illuminating coincidences. Don Cheadle, playing an L.A. detective named Graham, introduces this premise just after his unmarked car is rear-ended on the highway, momentarily stunning him and his partner, Ria (Jennifer Esposito). As he regains his senses, he remarks on the possible sociological significance of the accident. "In L.A., nobody touches you. We're always behind this metal and glass." This observation leads him to consider the consequences of such insularity. "I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other, just so we can feel something." Ria looks at him with misgiving, clearly worried about his mental state. "You've lost your frame of reference," she tells him, trying to bring him back to reality. But the film argues otherwise: It's our standard frame of reference that is delusional, not Graham. This is made clear a moment later, when Ria gets out of the car to talk to the Chinese woman who ran into them and finds out what she has been missing in the way of personal touch. Although she could hardly be unaware that Hispanics are not uniformly welcome in Los Angeles, she is visibly startled to hear the Asian lady loudly scorn the driving habits of Mexicans, in general, and hers, in particular. "Mexicans no know how to drive. You blake too fast," the lady from Shanghai shouts at her. Recovering her poise, Ria frostily observes that she "blakes" when cars ahead of her stop and that perhaps Ms. Shanghai might do likewise if she could only see above the dashboard. Soon the two women forsake subtle sarcasm and begin hurling demure eff-yous at one another. The scene is richly comic and delightfully disconcerting. I haven't heard an Oriental say "blake" on screen since Charlie Chan's Number One son smashed up the patriarchal Plymouth.

Crash figuratively stages a series of such collisions. Each time they occur, the soundtrack crackles with insults that occasionally escalate to physical assaults. Anthony (Chris Bridges) and Peter (Larenz Tate), two mindless thug wannabes, prowl a tony Los Angeles shopping district for car-jacking opportunities and manage to heist the district attorney's mammoth Lincoln Navigator. In the aftermath, the



Crash

Produced by Bull's Eye Entertainment
Directed by Paul Haggis
Screenplay by Paul Haggis
and Robert Moresco
Distributed by Lions Gate Films

D.A. (Brendan Fraser) worries he'll lose the black vote. He decides there is only one way to make amends for becoming a victim of black crime: He orders his black chief of staff to find a black person on whom he can pin a medal with the television cameras whirring. Meanwhile, police officer Ryan (Matt Dillon) uses the carjacking as an excuse to stop a different Lincoln Navigator, this one driven by an upscale black couple. He can't resist the opportunity to indulge in a little racial humiliation. Once he has the couple out of the car, he lingeringly explores the woman's body for hidden weapons while her husband looks on hopelessly. Back at the district attorney's home, Daniel (Michael Peña), a Mexican locksmith, is replacing the locks in case the carjackers decide to pay a visit after their joyride. The D.A.'s wife (Sandra Bullock) takes one look at Daniel's tattoos and unravels. She is sure that he is a "gangbanger" and that he will pass on copies of the keys to his Hispanic "homies," a surmise she makes loudly in his presence, to Daniel's helpless chagrin. Later, Daniel runs afoul of Farhad (Shaun Toub), an armed Iranian shopkeeper who harbors the same suspicion. Farhad believes Daniel set him up for a break-in. Elsewhere, a white cop shoots a black cop dead. Although there is ample evidence that the shooting was justifiable, the cop soon finds himself being sacrificed to the political needs of the district attorney: Rather than pin a medal on a black, he'll pin a murder on a white. To

make it a slam dunk, he extorts reluctant assistance from Graham, using racial intimidation to get his way.

Stupid and vicious as their behavior often is, these characters can be oddly perceptive and compassionate at other moments. Take Anthony, for the most unlikely instance. He's a paranoid junior gangster who figures he has the right to steal cars so he will not have to ride city buses. Buses, he reasons, have been designed with huge windows to expose their mostly black passengers to white ridicule. Demented? No doubt. But he is capable of more cogent analysis. When Peter listens to rap music in the stolen Lincoln, Anthony condemns the genre as just another example of black enslavement. "It's just black people demeaning other black people, using ['nigger'] over and over. You ever hear white people callin' each other 'honky' all the time?" By the end of the film, he will put his anger to more constructive use when he comes upon some contemporary slaves of another race. Dimly recognizing the ironic parallel with his ancestry, he frees them at considerable expense to himself.

The seemingly irredeemable Officer Ryan is another turnabout. When he happens upon an overturned jeep burning on the highway, he leaps to rescue its driver, only to discover that she is the black woman he groped the night before. Here and elsewhere, Haggis deploys a logic of coincidence that oddly does not seem strained because it is so thematically resonant. The woman in question despises Ryan and thinks him representative of whites generally. Her rescue forces her to think again. Men like Ryan who wouldn't dream of inviting blacks into their homes are routinely willing to risk their lives for them, when the need arises. Haggis wants these moral dichotomies to hit both characters full force. The expressions on the actors' faces tell us that the rescue will change them utterly. Both have disturbed each other's prejudices irrevocably.

What struck me most in my second viewing was the film's hopeful Christian imagery. Events take place against a backdrop of Christmas decorations, especially crèches. They are everywhere—in stores, private homes, and, in one particularly confrontational scene, painted on a suburban garage door. The Christ Child seems omnipresent. He also puts in some key appearances with Saint Christopher. When Peter hops into the SUV, he slaps a plastic statuette of Saint Christopher

carrying the Christ Child on the dashboard, explaining to the irascible Anthony that it will protect their getaway. I had thought the purpose of this background imagery was to serve as an ironic counterpoint to the deeply unchristian behavior in the narrative's foreground. I still think this, but it has another and, I now realize, more important purpose. The Infant Christ occasions what could be said to be an appeal to everyone's ideal nature. Time and again, otherwise world-weary, soul-hardened characters show themselves capable of love and self-sacrifice when family and children are at stake. Ryan, for instance, devotes himself tirelessly to his aging father, who is suffering from prostate cancer. The Iranian shopkeeper's daughter does whatever she can to defend her father from his own hotheaded inclinations. Graham's drug-addicted mother never stops trying to enlist his aid in a search for his errant younger brother. Of all these family relations, the locksmith's devotion to his five-year-old daughter is the most compelling. She has been traumatized by a bullet having been shot through her bedroom window one night. To allay her fears, Daniel tells her he has a magic invisible cloak that will protect her, which he takes off his own shoulders in delicate pantomime and wraps around hers. The girl at first exhibits skepticism as she enters into this playful fantasy, but her father's playacting is so sincere that she embraces the story of how a fairy had given him the cloak long ago. It is a very touching moment, but, more than this, it indicates how she has saved him. His love for her has prevented him from becoming the criminal the D.A.'s wife automatically assumed him to be. Furthermore, it sets up what will become one of this episodic film's most important climaxes. Without divulging any-

thing, it is enough to say that the moment connects with Saint Christopher—whose name means "Christ-bearer." As the story goes, the saint had dedicated his life to helping travelers ford a particularly turbulent stream. One day, a small child asked to be carried across. Christopher readily complied but then found the child becoming impossibly heavy. When he expressed his surprise, the child revealed himself to be Christ, explaining that His weight was the burden of sin that He carried. This image of a strong man saving a child and being saved by the child, in turn, opens and closes the narrative and ripples through all its events as something more than ironic counterpoint. The film clearly wants us to reflect on the capacity for devotion and sacrifice that resides in all of our hearts, even the most bitter and cynical. What would happen, the film asks, if we all devoted ourselves to being Christ-bearers, ready to carry not just our family and friends through troubled waters but also everyone else who is in need?

After seeing *Crash* the first time, I left the theater feeling elated but not entirely sure why. Now I know. *Crash* lifts our spirits because it never flinches from exhibiting the ugliness of which we are capable, yet it never fails to remind us of the redemption that awaits those who rise to the challenge of rescuing one another.

Having praised *Crash* to this degree, I must now register one reservation. Like so many movies today, this one has its *de rigueur* nude sex scene. Though very brief and not wholly gratuitous, it is there, and it is annoying—especially because I would like to recommend this film to adolescents. Yes, I know only too well that every adolescent in America is acquainted with such images, but I would rather not support the trend. ©

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The Candidate

A politician's life—Héctor was discovering—is, like that of any celebrity, not a happy one.

Even before he'd announced his candidacy for the open seat in New Mexico's First Congressional District, Tomasina Luna issued a campaign statement announcing her endorsement by the National Council of La Raza, accusing the Republican Party of racism (amounting possibly to genocide), and charging her opponent with willful violation of city zoning and state environmental law by creating a junk yard around his house. After dragging its feet for weeks a hundred miles away in Santa Fe, the New Mexico GOP at last sent Héctor a campaign manager he wouldn't have asked to serve with him on a church committee. Haníbal Aragón had a degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law, where he'd been elected secretary of the UNM Campus Republicans. Having exercised his J.D. for two or three years, Haníbal abandoned the practice of law to become a lobbyist in Santa Fe for the state tourism board and the city of Roswell in his capacity as president of the New Mexico chapter of the National Association of Paranormal Americans. In addition to politics and extraterrestrials, Haníbal's other great interest was the classical guitar, on which he performed regularly in coffeehouses around New Mexico, dressed in a black beret and a black cape with a scarlet lining as he fumbled out isolated bars of Ponce, Rodrigo, and Lopez-Chavarri. At their first fundraising event together, Haníbal, to Héctor's embarrassment, had produced his guitar with the apparent intent of serenading the assembly of cattle ranchers, bank branch managers, and chambers-of-commerce officials before Héctor could discourage him. Also at several early appearances, he'd passed out brochures for the International UFO Museum & Research Center, thus giving Héctor's would-be constituents the impression that the gray Roswell alien, not Héctor Villa, was running for Congress. And as if Tomasina and Haníbal weren't cross enough to bear, Héctor had problems at home, where AveMaría and Contracepción conspired—so it seemed to him—to make his domestic life as mis-

erable as his professional one already was. Even before he learned his wife had opened an account there, Héctor received a bill from the Neiman Marcus store in Albuquerque amounting to nearly \$6,500 for items purchased in the Ladies' Clothing Department. In the evenings, his phone rang off the hook with calls from the managers of rock bands Contracepción had promised she'd ask her father to book for campaign appearances throughout the district. Héctor's computer-service business was beginning to suffer, as the desperate parents of children deprived of their favorite video games by crashed systems found their emergency voice messages left unresponded to among the scores recorded by inquiring radio, TV, and newspaper reporters. Finally, little Dubya was growing querulous and fretful from being left so much at the neighbors' house. Héctor, who'd had no notion of all that a political campaign involved, found his already sizable respect and awe for George W. Bush increased exponentially. If this was what you had to go through to get yourself elected a lowly U.S. representative, it must require real genius—and heroic genius at that—to make a grab for the brass ring, and seize it!

Though the thought shamed Héctor, he couldn't help envying the President, his reticent First Lady, and their two well-behaved daughters, both of whom knew enough at least to *try* to keep out of the limelight. By contrast, AveMaría—who insisted on joining him on the platform whenever it was at all possible—never missed an opportunity to put a word of her own in, much to the approbation of the media who made a point of reporting her comments. Almost as bad, the stylish Neiman Marcus career woman's outfits she'd put on the new card in the belief they could be charged to campaign expenses made her look 25 pounds heavier. As for Contracepción, who tagged along with her mother when she wasn't in school and seemed to make a point of dressing (Héctor thought) like a Juárez whore, nothing he had to say could stop her from climbing onto the platform after he was through speaking and flinging herself about with a microphone in hand, shrieking like Jennifer Lopez to the



accompaniment of whatever band she'd talked her father into hiring for the event. Once a week at least, Héctor remonstrated with the Villa females—without, however, getting anywhere in the slightest.

"This is America, not Namiquipa!" AveMaría would protest. "You're so *old-fashioned*, Panchito! Here, people *care* about politicians' wives. I go to the supermarket—what do I see in the tabloids at the checkout? *Not* President Bush! *No!* I see the Bush twins! Senator Kerry? *No*—they have a picture of Teresa Heinz Kerry instead! Did you know she's gained a hundred pounds and shaved her head since the election?"

He had no better success with Contracepción. "*¡O papaito!*" she'd wail. "*No*body wants to listen to some boring politician! It's the live entertainment everyone *really* cares about! I'm famous already. Just yesterday, some guy says he's a talent scout from Brazil promised he could make me a star if I'd only go to his house with him and let him take a few pictures!"

So Héctor gave in finally, while keeping his eyes peeled and a switchblade in his pocket for the talent scout, in case the *tipo* showed up again.

Meanwhile, he had to endure cameramen in his front yard, GOP strategists and ethnic activists on the phone from Santa Fe and around the Southwest, calls from the office of the president of the Mexican Republic in Mexico City and the Mexican consulate in Albuquerque, and the inevitable campaign-finance problems and threatened scandals. (In one instance, the powers that be in Santa Fe panicked when it came to light that the promoter of one of Contracepción's rock bands was a certain Sid Abramoff. Fortunately, the fellow was found to be no relation to the famous lobbyist in Washington.) There was also the incessant stream of carping, negative, and highly unfair attacks from Tomasina

Luna, and the consequent drop in the Republican poll numbers—which in turn produced more phone calls, alternately worried and angry, from Santa Fe, demanding that Héctor respond with negative and unfair attacks of his own. Héctor did his best, but Haníbal Aragón proved worse than useless in drafting a campaign speech (twice he wanted to suggest that Tomasina was from Venus), and he himself, while fluent enough in English in a conversational way, lacked the necessary rhetorical skills in what was, after all, for him a second language. In despair, he approached Brother Billy Joe—by far the most literate man of Héctor's acquaintance, whose Sunday sermons he greatly admired—for help, and got it. Indeed, the preacher's aid proved nearly overwhelming, consisting as it did of florid attacks on the Party of the Antichrist and anticipations of the Rapture in which papists like Tomasina Luna and other unbelievers and idolators would be left behind. The effect of the Billy Joe-Héctor collaborations was a further decline in the polls, increasingly agitated calls from party headquarters, and a significant drop in contributions to the Villa campaign. In desperation, Héctor considered dropping out of the race, only to discover himself unable in his heart to let George Dubya down. If only (he anguished) the President would endorse his candidacy in a public announcement—better yet, come out to New Mexico to campaign with him! Héctor had no doubt whatsoever that a visit by President Bush would cast the Luna woman into outer darkness and clinch his own election overnight.

By mid-October, with the election less than three weeks off, catastrophe loomed for the New Mexico Republican Party in District I. Clearly, the situation called for drastic measures, but no one could think what. So far, all the best ideas had failed, including attempts to portray Tomasina as a descendant of the *conquistadores* and, as such, an oppressor of the indigenous peoples of North America, and a lukewarm supporter of the Iraq war (a charge she deftly fielded by citing her long-standing friendship with Senator Clinton, well known for having voted for the war and staunchly defended it in Congress ever since). All seemed hopeless when, as if by a miracle, hope struck at last, overnight and in the most unexpected manner.

It came through the heroic efforts of an embedded "journalist" with the Luna campaign posing as a reporter for a granola paper in Taos at the behest of a top strategist

in Washington. (Rumor had it that this was actually Karl Rove himself.) By a brilliantly inventive and daring stratagem, the Republican agent had managed to gain entry to Mrs. Luna's personal computer. As soon as the screensaver flashed on, the agent knew he need look no further for the efficient means of Tomasina Luna's political effacement. He simply took a photo of the screen with his cellphone and downloaded the image at home later. Even before Héctor himself was told, the entire New Mexico GOP establishment had learned the nature of that image: Vice President Cheney, stark naked save for a Roman general's helmet on his head and, in his hand, a sword that drooped as if formed of India rubber in a shape vaguely suggestive of the flaccid male member. At last, the evil Democrats had gone too far! The desecration, the *lèse-majesté* was simply too enormous—immeasurably worse than setting a match to a piece of red-white-and-blue linen with a pattern of stars and stripes printed across it. All that was necessary now was for the Horror to be unveiled publicly at the earliest possible moment—at a Villa rally, with the media standing by and a large crowd assembled (by the promise of free drink, if necessary).

Santa Fe determined upon the Willie M. Chavez State Park in Belen at six o'clock in the evening, when the Santa Fe Burlington Northern workers would be off work already and the day commuters arriving home from Albuquerque. Héctor was like a man brought back from the dead. He felt absolutely assured now that Washington, D.C., was his future—for the next two years, at least, and after that, who knew? Filled with a brimming self-confidence, he wrote his own speech for the occasion, politely refusing help from Haníbal Aragón and Brother Billy Joe alike. And this time, Héctor positively insisted on the presence of AveMaría and Contracepción with him and other GOP dignitaries on the speakers' platform. He even sent out an emergency request for the Abramoff band, which he installed in a prominent place next to the free beer and *chorizo* stand, immediately to the right of the platform.

It was a beautiful fall evening, the great riverine cottonwoods along the Rio Grande raising their golden crowns against a cobalt sky, the lion-colored mesa stretching east to the edgy green barrier of the Manzano Mountains. And the crowd, too, was a good one. At least, there were a lot of people. Right from the start, however, something felt wrong to Héctor.

The crowd was *too* large, for one thing. And too many of the faces upturned toward him looked like Democratic, not Republican, faces. (Twenty years in the U.S. had taught him that a liberal face always looks different from a conservative one, as if the two belonged almost to members of separate species.) Even so, Héctor felt assured that most of those assembled to hear him were his people.

In any event, he had to get on with the business, and so he did. It wasn't until his first three or four applause lines met with scattered poolings of laughter rather than the universal marine roar he'd expected that he began to think there must be something wrong, after all. Perhaps the Luna had got the wind up, somehow. For reassurance, Héctor glanced behind himself, where the big video-projection screen awaited the damning image prepared for it. Then he went on with his speech.

He had just come to the part where, for the first time, he linked Hillary Clinton's name with Tomasina's when a woman stood up, very near to the projector itself, and shouted at him, waving a piece of paper above her head. Héctor tried to ignore her but found that, refusing steadfastly to shut up, she could not be ignored. In the next instant, he recognized the woman for Tomasina Luna herself. Shocked into momentary speechlessness by her wholly undemocratic and un-American tactics, Héctor gave Tomasina the opening she wanted.

"You dare throw Ms. Clinton up at *me*, do you?" she yelled. "Well, let me tell you, *Señor Villa*, there's something else Hillary's against, and that's illegal immigration! And that means you, *amigo*! Don't try and deny it! I have, right here in my hand, a letter written to me, personally, by your own cousin—Eufemio Villa in Namiquipa, Mexico—that tells the whole story of how you and your wife snuck across the border twenty years ago in an undocumented state! Let's put it up on your projector, *Señor*, so we can all have a look for ourselves!"

The Villas, pursued by loud jeers issuing from open-mouthed Democratic faces and a scattering of flung *chorizos*, had nearly reached the safety of AveMaría's Subaru when Héctor's cell phone rang. As a man clutches at a straw, he grabbed the thing from his pocket and clapped it to his ear.

"Hello—Mr. Villa? This is the White House calling. Please hold the line for President Bush. The President wishes to congratulate you on a major campaign speech today, Sir!"

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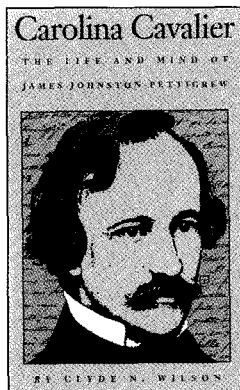
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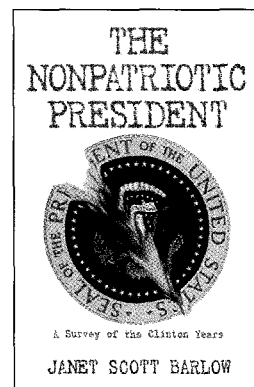
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—From the Introduction by William Murchison of the *Dallas Morning News*

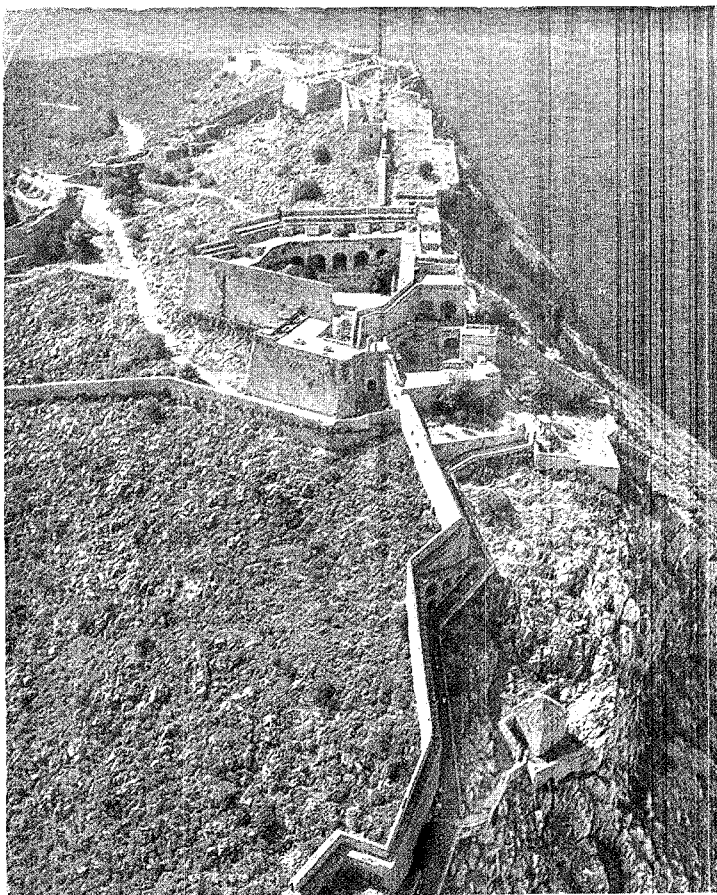
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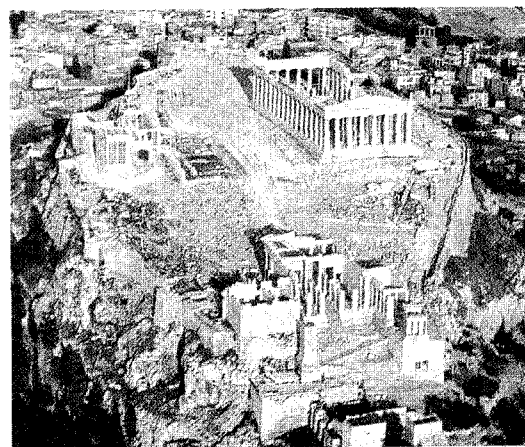
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